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S E R M O N S

CONCERNING THE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SINS,

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AMERICAN TRADING COMPANY

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S O L E M N A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T O F S I N.
I N S E V E R A L S E R M O N S.

C O N T A I N I N G
A N E X P L I C A T I O N and V I N D I C A T I O N of various
Passages in the *Solemn Acknowledgement of Sins*, prefixed to the *Bond* for
renewing our *Solemn Covenants*.

My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements.
Psal. cxix. 120.

E D I N B U R G H:

Printed by R. FLEMING and A. NEILL, and sold by all the
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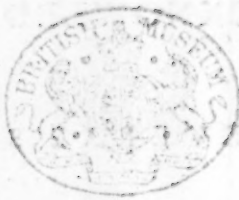
A T T E M P T

TO

THE

IN THE

COMMONS



AND

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Printed by R. E. Francis and A. Lewis, and L. J. G. & Co.
Printers in Town and Country.
[Printed in London]

T O T H E
A S S O C I A T E C O N G R E G A T I O N
o f N O R H A M.

D E A R F R I E N D S ,

TH E following DISCOURSES claim your attention, equally with the foregoing. Right covenanting consists, more generally, of two parts; an acknowledgement of sin, and an engagement to duty. The last of these was considered in the discourses formerly published; the first of them, in those that follow.—The *Bond* for renewing our solemn Covenants is opposed by many, chiefly on account of its reduplicating upon the *Acknowledgement of sins*. Backsliders cannot endure that their evils should be testified against. And here lies the chief spring of all the spite that is thrown out against covenanting in our day. However, this makes it necessary that this part of the subject should be well understood.—A mourning over the sins of the land appears to be the special duty of the times. Sinful times are mournful times; and our exercise ought to be suited unto them accordingly. If the Lord sees it necessary to plead his quarrel, in the way of awful judgments,—this is the proper preparative for them. If he is pleased to return in Sovereign grace, it will be in the way of making us plead guilty to the indictment he has against us.—I essayed an explication of the *Bond*, in the Sermons themselves on covenanting. But an explication of the *Acknowledgement of Sins* could not be brought into discourses from the pulpit. I have, however, added an explication and vindication of various passages of it in its proper place. The substance of what is said on these passages in the *Testimony*, and other papers published by the *Associate Presbytery* and *Synod*,—is here gathered together, and set in one point of view for the ease of the ordinary reader. And particular care is taken to instruct the truth, as well as the sense, of the several articles. And indeed this makes the principal part of the following *Pamphlet*.—Nothing more or further than a revival of vital religion and practical godliness is aimed at in the ensuing discourses; that is, a revival of that religion which lies in the faith and love and practice of all the truths and ordinances and laws of Christ, with heart-grief for the awful inroads which have been and are still made upon them. For as for that religion, which lies in concern
about

about one's own personal interests, to the utter disregarding of the interests of God's declarative glory,—it is far from deserving the honourable character of real religion. All right concern about personal interests must issue in a concern about God's declarative glory, according to a person's knowledge of it; for an essential and principal part of saving conversion to God, lies in being made single-hearted for God's glory.—That this essay may be a mean of reviving such a concern, is the desire and hope of

NORHAM, Jan. 15.
1771.

JAMES MORISON,

P. S. Two Pamphlets were lately published by Mr Andrew Scot of Dundee: The one entitled, *An Account of the rise, grounds, and progress of the late difference between the Antiburgher-Seceders and him*; the other, *The peculiar Scheme of the Antiburgher-Seceders unmasked*. I have not entered into any formal or direct answer to these publications,—further than in two or three instances; and indeed the nature of this undertaking did not admit of following the author through all the labyrinth of confusion in which he attempts to bewilder his readers. That therefore is left to any of my Reverend Fathers or Brethren, who shall be pleased to undertake the drudgery. However, I was necessarily led, in the explication and vindication of the *Acknowledgement of Sins*, to obviate the chief of the objections which he has started against it. And I have endeavoured to lay the whole in such a manner, as to guard people against the snares laid for them by him and others in these perilous times. And indeed I might have done all this, although I had never seen Mr Scot's performances; because he has in reality brought forth nothing, but the stale objections of those malignant Sectarians who have formerly taken the field against a Covenanted Reformation.

It is scarce worth pains to observe, that the foresaid gentleman, in his *Peculiar Scheme*, p. 137, is so obliging as to say,—that I have *barefacedly preached down—an essential ingredient of the present state of covenanting-work*; because, in the Sermons on Covenanting, I refuse that matters of pure revelation are proper for being enforced by the civil Magistrate with civil pains and punishments. This charge, though brought directly against me, is ultimately levelled against a Covenanted Reformation,—and is sufficiently wipt off in the ensuing discourses.—In return to Mr Scot for his complaisance, I would only wish he would seriously consider with himself, if he has not conceived a rooted prejudice against the Covenanted Reformation itself,—and only makes a handle of certain measures for a cover thereof.

C O N,

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I. Pages 1;—19.

TH E text explained, doctrine and method. Remarks as to how far we are concerned in the sins of our fathers, and of a present backsliding generation. The duty of a Solemn Acknowledgement of Sin enjoined in Scripture; particularly Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. and Jer. xiii. 25. No opposition, but the greatest harmony, between a private and public confession of the sins of the times. A caveat to parents, with respect to the training up of their children.

S E R M O N II. Pages 19,—36.

A Solemn Acknowledgement of Sin,—a duty which we owe to God, to our Neighbour, to Ourselves, to Posterity, and to the Community of which we are members. Recommended by the example of the best of Saints; particularly of Noah, Daniel and Job, David, Jeremiah and Josiah; by the practice of the Puritans in the reign of Queen Elizabeth,—and of the church of Scotland on various occasions, particularly in the year 1596. A disposition hereunto, inbred in all Saints. Not peculiar to the Jewish Church, but common to them and the Church of the New Testament. A dictate of nature. Jon. iii. 4, 5. considered. Foretold to take place in New-Testament times. Zech. xii. 10,—14. explained. Practised under the New-Testament,—by Paul, the Church of Corinth, and the witnesses under the reign of Antichrist. (The use of Sackcloth considered.) Recommended by Christ himself. No reason therefore to reproach it as hypocritical. The noble ends to which it serves. The delay of desolating judgments, nowise inconsistent with former warnings.

S E R M O N III. Pages 36,—97.

The matter of a Solemn Acknowledgement of Sin must be full, particular, certain (The truth of the facts named in the Acknowledgement of Sins prefixed to the Bond—proved) and plain.—Explication of various passages of the Acknowledgement of Sins. The several articles thereof, matter of very serious consideration. No measure implying persecution for conscience-sake—adopted in the Testimony or Acknowledgement of Sins. Why the Acknowledgement of Sins begins with the Public Resolutions. Of the admission of Malignants into places of power and trust, in consequence of them,—in several particulars; a vindication of the Secession Testimony on this head, from various misrepresentations. Of the Overthrow of a covenanted reformation at the

the *Restoration*. Of the general defection therefrom. Of the sinful oaths in that period. Of the Indulgences, and Toleration. Of the Revolution Settlement in various particulars; a justification of the *Testimony* on this head from different exceptions; of a legal Establishment of Religion; of excommunication. Of the Union; the Oath of Abjuration; Patronage and Toleration. Of reading the Act of Parliament concerning Captain *Porteous*. Of *Cambuslang* work.

S E R M O N IV. Pages 98,—113.

A Solemn Acknowledgement of Sin implies—A searching into our own Sins, the Sins of our Fathers, and of the present generation; a sense of God's Displeasure on account of them; Grief for them, as dishonourable to God, hurtful to the present generation and to posterity; Self-condemnation; a Dread of God's Judgments; a Deprecating of his indignation;—it is to be accompanied with hopeful expectations; and must issue in genuine reformation. It is to be done both personally and socially: And in both these respects it is to be made—Sincerely; believingly; singly; freely; sorrowfully; and continually. One special cause of the Lord's hiding his face at this day. (No relevant ground for refusing to pay what are called the *Easter-reckonings*.)

S E R M O N V. Pages 113,—130.

Solemn Fasting and Humiliation, with an Acknowledgement of our own and the land's Sins, a moral Duty. (Why Seceders do not observe Fasts appointed by the King.) Seasonable in times of abounding Sinfulness, of impending judgements, and of urgent necessities. The Seasonableness of Fasting argues the Seasonableness of Covenanting. A Cavil against National Covenanting obviated. The *Bond's* reduplicating upon the *Acknowledgement of Sins*, no just objection against the *Act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing our Solemn Covenants*. *Act concerning the terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion*—justified. Remarkable passage from Mr *Ralph Erskine*. Indifference about the Sins of the times, the Spring of People's backwardness to the duty of Covenanting. The love of Sin, the Spring of a backsliding generation's malignity against it. The Duty of those who propose to join in the Bond; to get their Judgements well informed about the Sins of the times, (a Cavil about the Admission of Persons to join in the Bond—answered,) and their hearts deeply affected with a sense of the evil of them.

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An Attempt to vindicate, explain, and en-
force the important Duty of a *Solemn ac-
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Neh. ix. 3. *And they stood up in their place, and read in the
book of the law of the Lord their God, one fourth part of the day;
and another fourth part they confessed and worshipped the Lord
God.*

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A SOLEMN acknowledgment of sin makes an essential
part of right covenanting. Sinners cannot return to God,
but in the way of confessing their apostasy from him. A
sinful church and land cannot return to God, but in the way of
acknowledging their iniquities, whether of a more public or pri-
vate nature : One special part of their return to him is in such
an acknowledgment. In this way therefore, the Jews renewed co-
venant with God at this time ; according to what is represented in
this chapter and the next,--particularly in the words of the text :
*And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of
the Lord their God, one fourth part of the day; and another fourth
part they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God.*

E R-

The day of atonement was the only anniversary stated fast and
humiliation, that God gave to the church of the Jews. But they ap-
pointed occasional fasts, as their circumstances from time to time
required it. The fast that was observed upon this occasion, was
of this sort. For the day of atonement was appointed to be ob-
served on the tenth day of the seventh month, Lev. xxiii. 27.
whereas this fast was observed on the twenty-fourth day of that
month, as we are expressly told in the first verse of this chapter ;
thus it was a fast observed by them, not as what they were under
an obligation unto by the Mosaic œconomy, and therefore not as
peculiarly a Jewish church ; but in general as a church, a profes-
sing people, deeply sensible of their great sins and miseries. Con-
sequently, their practice herein was for an example to us. And
as in appointing a fast, they were for an example to us ; so also in
the work of that day, which was indeed peculiarly exemplary.
They read in the law of God for their instruction and humiliation ;
they made an humble acknowledgment of their manifold tref-

passes, aggravating them from the consideration of God's great mercies. And they concluded the work of the day with a solemn engagement unto new obedience. The first two of these are more generally contained in the words of the text.

1. *They read in the book of the law of the Lord their God, one fourth part of the day :* That, in the glass thereof, they might see their sin and duty; what to confess, and what to amend; what to part with, and what to resolve upon. This reading was a sort of preaching. At the late feast of trumpets, Ezra, with his assistants, *read the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading*, chap. viii. 8. And we may suppose they did so at this time also. *And they stood up in their place for this purpose.* The Levites stood up upon a pulpit, erected of purpose for the better hearing, and read and expounded the law. The people stood and heard; hereby expressing their reverence for the lawgiver, and their receiving the law at his mouth.---The difference between the feast of trumpets, and this solemn fast is very observable. At the feast of trumpets, they were restrained from weeping, as being unsuitable to the nature of the festival, chap. viii. 2, 10, 11. On this day of solemn humiliation, they were required to express their grief, as being the proper work of the day. So they heard the law; examined and judged themselves by it; saw wherein they had come short of obedience to it, and wherein they had transgressed it; and gave full vent unto their grief and sorrow on account thereof.

2. *They confessed and worshipped the Lord their God, one fourth part of the day.* The first of these expressions may perhaps signify their making acknowledgment of their sins to God in prayer: And the last of them may perhaps signify their singing psalms and hymns in his praise. And there is no doubt but they joined these two parts of divine worship together, which have such a near alliance to one another. Several of David's psalms were abundantly apposite to the occasion. However, I rather think that by these two expressions is denoted one and the same exercise. It is certain, they are purposely conjoined in the inspired original. In confessing, they worshipped; and in worshipping, they confessed. The nature of their acknowledgment seems hereby to be very emphatically expressed. They own the equity of all the judgments with which God had exercised them; hereby giving glory to his justice. They magnify his gracious dealings towards them; hereby giving glory to his goodness. At the same time, they confess their sin, as being aggravated from the consideration of God's kind and merciful dealings with them. Thus, in confessing their sin, they glorified God. This view of the text is justified by
the

the whole of the acknowledgment in the subsequent part of this chapter.

The connection between these two parts of the verse is very observable: They divide the day betwixt them: One half of the day, they are employed in reading and expounding the law; the other half, in prayer. The word furnished them with ample matter for prayer. In the former, God spake to them; in the latter, they spake to God. The law convinced them of their sinfulness; and in prayer, they burst forth into an humble acknowledgment of it. The law informed them of their duty; and in prayer, they expressed their resolutions of new obedience accordingly. From the morning sacrifice, which was about nine o'clock (according to our reckoning) till noon, they were employed in hearing the word. From noon till the evening sacrifice, which was about three o'clock, they were employed in prayer. All this time they spent in religious exercises, without saying, *Behold, what a weariness is it!* Or, as some think, they spent the whole twelve † hours of the day in those exercises: From sun rising to nine, they read; from nine to noon, they prayed; from noon to three, they read again; and from three to sun setting, they prayed again. For, as one devoutly observes, "The work of a fast-day is good work; and therefore we should endeavour to make a day's work, a good day's work of it."

We shall only further observe here, from the subsequent part of this chapter; that they make an humble acknowledgment, not only of their own sins, but also of the sins of their fathers,—tracing their corruptions from their very original as a church and nation. From all which this doctrine is plain, namely,

That to make a public and joint confession of public sins, our sins and the sins of the land, whether in present

‡ The Jews divided their day into four great hours; the first, which they called the third, consisted of half the time from sun-rising to noon; the second, which they called the sixth, consisted of the other half; the third, which they called the ninth, consisted of half the time from noon to sun-setting; the fourth, which they called the twelfth, consisted of the other half. They also divided their day, viz. from sun-rising to sun-setting, into twelve lesser hours; and their great hours were denominated from the last of them. Though their days were longer and shorter, according to the different seasons of the year, they always reckoned themselves to have twelve hours. See John xi. 31. Matt. xx. 3,—6. chap. xxiii. 45.

present or former generations,—is a duty indispensably incumbent upon us.

Here we shall essay, through divine assistance, after premising some things for paving our way,—to shew, *First*, the warrant; *Secondly*, the matter; *Thirdly*, the nature; *Fourthly*, the manner; *Fifthly*, the season—of this necessary duty: And *Lastly*, we shall make some practical improvement of the subject.

It may not be improper to make these two remarks in the entry.

1. That we are in the first place, and in a special manner to be humbled for own sins, and to make confession of them accordingly. However nearly we are concerned with the sins of others, we are still more nearly interested in our own. To mourn for sin therefore, is a charity which must begin at home. Every one must in the first place say, *What have I done?* And indeed if we look rightly into our hearts and ways, we will see far greater matter of humiliation about ourselves, than about all the world beside. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* They know not themselves who do not *feel* it to be so. And out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, and such like, Matt. xv. 19. The same corrupt nature is in us, which is the source of all the abominations that break out in the world. Here lies the seed, from which they all spring. Thanks to the restraints of providence and the riches of grace, and not to any goodness of ours,—that we have not run to the same excess of riot with the worst. Instead of looking down upon profane sinners with a supercilious contempt, we may beat upon our own breasts, and say, *The same evil is here* †. The sinfulness of others may serve as a glass wherein to see our own wicked hearts; and let us view them therein accordingly.

However, this must not hinder us from being grieved also for the sins of others. As it is hypocritical to pretend to mourn for the sins of others, while we are not heartily grieved for our own; so it is selfish to mourn for our own, while we do not also lament the sins of others. It argues a concern for our own safety, to the disregarding of God's glory and our neighbour's welfare: It is a saying upon the matter, we care not for the dishonours done to God, or the ruin brought upon others,—if we ourselves are in safety; which is a temper of spirit diametrically opposite to that of a Christian. The truth is, if we are really grieved for the

corruptions

† Holy Mr *Bradford* was wont to do so, whenever he saw a Malefactor led to the place of execution.

corruptions of our own hearts, it is impossible but we must be also grieved for all the out-breakings of such corruptions in others. In a word, the grief of those who pretend to mourn for their own sins, while they are utterly unconcerned about the sins of others,—is sadly to be suspected. For we do not mourn for sin at all, unless we mourn for it as sin; that is, as dishonourable to God, as wounding to the heart of the Redeemer, and as grieving to the Holy Ghost. Now, all sin is such; and therefore if we mourn for any sin as such, we must mourn for all sin.

2. That there are various respects in which we are deeply concerned with the sins of others.

(1.) We are deeply concerned in the sins of our fathers. We do not here speak of that peculiar concern which we have with the sin of our first father, *Adam*. We are far from imagining that we have any such concern with the sins of our other fathers, as with his first sin. His breach of covenant---subjects all his natural posterity to the curse, independent of their following his example. Their imitating him, is the consequence of the imputation of ~~his sin~~; and not the cause of it. *By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners*, Rom. v. 18, 19. *We were by nature the children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. But no body imagines, that any of the sins of any of our other fathers makes us such. However, we have a twofold concern in them.

[1.] In so far as we imitate them, we make them our own. Imitation serves us heirs to them. It brings a double guiltiness upon us; our fathers guiltiness, as well as our own. The longer a family persists in sin, they bring the heavier wrath upon themselves. This seems to be the meaning of the penal sanction annexed to the second commandment: *I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*, Exod. xx. 5. Agreeably hereunto, it is said in Psal. cix. 14, 15. *Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord: and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.* Nay, this dreadful doom will light upon the posterity of sinners, though they pretend to disown the evil deeds of their fathers, if they are found to persist in the like. This is our Lord's doctrine, Matt. xxiii. 29,—35. *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them*
which

which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and Scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Instead of killing the prophets, as their fathers had done,—they pretended a mighty veneration for them. Yet they persecuted Christ, to whom all the prophets bore witness; and nated that very doctrine out of his mouth, which they would have been thought to respect in their writings. They pursued those that were sent by him with the same spirit of malignity, though they said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses said, Acts xxvi. 22. And hereby they served themselves heirs to all the guiltiness of their fathers, in killing the prophets.—Thus it is of no avail in the sight of God, for persons to pretend a respect for the testimony of former times; while they despise a suitable application of that same testimony, against the evils of the present times.

[2.] It sometimes fares the worse, both with families and nations, for the sins of their ancestors; in respect of the temporal calamities which, both in the nature of the things and by the righteous judgment of God, they bring upon them.—There are innumerable cases, in which the sin of parents naturally tends to the hurt of their children. The rebel-father forfeits the inheritance for his son, as well as himself. And it is more owing to the goodness of providence, than to the wise management of our ancestors, this time hundred years,—that they have not engulfed us in the bottomless abyss of popery and slavery.—Nay, when it is difficult to observe any such necessary connection, the iniquity of fathers frequently brings heavy judgments upon their posterity. And it is necessary that it should be so, for the manifestation of God's government of the world. If a sinful people should always go unpunished, they would be tempted to think that God had forsaken the earth, Psal. l. 21. 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. But when the judgments of God come to fall upon them, they are obliged to see, — that there is no forgetfulness with him, but that *verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth*, Psal. lviii. 11. Their sufferings bring them to acknowledge, what no warnings could ever bring them to; even *that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men*, Dan. iv. 25. So though the Lord may sometimes bear long with a sinful people, that their punishment may be

be the more eminently seen to be of him, when it comes, 2 Pet. iii. 8, 9, 10. yet the maintainance of a sense of his moral government makes it necessary that he should not bear always.—Well, the punishment of *Saul's* seven sons is a clear example of children's suffering for the sins of their fathers. And the Jews captivity in Babylon is a no less evident instance of nations suffering for the sins of their fathers.—And that sinful churches and nations may lay their account with judgments of this nature, under the New Testament, as well as under the Old,—is abundantly evident, not only from the nature of God's moral government just now hinted at, but also from express scripture-threatnings against antichristian Babylon, in the book of the revelation; particularly chap. xviii. 24. *And in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.* And whoever presume upon impunity, bid fair to get an awful conviction of their mistake, 1 Thess. v. 3. *For when they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* Thus far we are concerned in the sins of our fathers.

(2.) We are deeply concerned in the sins of the present generation; particularly, of the community whereof we are members, whether as a church or commonwealth.

[1.] In so far as we imitate them, we make them our own. Conformity to the sinful customs of the times, involves us in all the guilt of the times. Thus *Jeroboam* is said to have made *Israel* to sin; his sin became theirs, by their compliance with him in it. The commandment is plain, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*, Exod. xxiii. 2. *And be not conformed to this world*, Rom. xii. 2. The apostle's exhortation is express, *be not ye therefore partakers with them. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.* Our Lord's warning is peremptory, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*, Rev. xviii. 4.—Nay, in so far as we do not bear a suitable testimony against the sins of the times, we are not free of guiltiness. *Eli's* soft reproof brought guilt upon his own soul, and destruction upon his sons, 1 Sam. ii. 27,---36. iii. 11,---14. To be ashamed of Christ and of his words, in an adulterous and sinful generation, is charged by the Supreme Judge as a sin of a very deep dye, Mark viii. 38. *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.* So an undue silence may as effectually ruin one, as criminal actions.

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[2.] The sins of a community, sooner or later, will bring the judgments of God upon it. I do not say, that the sins of individuals do so, when they are duly repented and testified against by the community, Deut. xix. 11,---13. chap. xxi. 1,---9. Numb. xvi. 46,---48. But when sin is tolerated; when it becomes general, and rages without controul; especially, when it comes to be established into a law: This subjects the community, whether church or nation, to the righteous judgments of God. One of three things must be the lot of such a sinful church and nation. Either they repent and reform, and so judgment is averted; as was frequently the case with the church and kingdom of Israel. Or they persist in sin, notwithstanding the calls of word and providence to repentance and reformation, and judgment comes; as in the case of the Jews carried to Babylon. Or, which is the worst of all judgments, God gives them up to the lusts of their own hearts; as in the case of the present Jews, the seven churches of Asia, and the antichristian state. Now, in this case, let us be ever so free from any personal involvement in the sins of the people among whom we live; we are deeply concerned in them, in respect both of our own and posterity's welfare. At any rate, they must affect the welfare of both our soul and body in this world. National sins bring national judgments. The sins of a church provoke the Lord to depart from his ordinances, which are the nourishment of his people. And suppose they cannot affect our eternal interest; yet if they provoke the Lord to remove our candlestick out of his place, they must endanger the eternal welfare of our posterity in the deepest manner. The posterity of the church of *Ephesus* are a melancholy example of this. See Rev. ii. 5.

We shall conclude this head, by observing what is of the most special consideration here; namely, that we are deeply interested in the sins both of our forefathers and of the present generation, ---as they are committed against God, as they obscure his declarative glory, and as they are hurtful to the interests of his kingdom.---*The Lord is our King*. Subjects have interest in the honour of their king. There is not a subject in *Britain*, whether he may think so or not, who is not deeply concerned, in point of interest as well as of duty, in what is dishonourable to our Sovereign King *George*, and hurtful to the interests of his kingdoms. But shall any reckon themselves less interested in the eternal God, than in a mortal man?---God is our Father. *A son honoureth his father*: If he is an ingenuous child, he cannot help interesting himself in what dishonours or hurts him. And the children of God are endued with a child-like disposition towards their
heavenly

heavenly Father.---*Our Maker is our husband.* The spouse has the same interest with her husband; and what affronts him, affects her. And we deal treacherously with our Divine Husband, if we are not in like manner disposed.---Christ is our friend. One who has the least spark of ingenuity or gratitude in him, cannot help being tenderly affected with what affronts his friend. And to such as reckon themselves nowise concerned in all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land, the Lord may justly say as to Israel of old; *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?* Deut. xxxii. 6. In all these respects we are deeply interested in the sins of our fathers, and of the present generation; and therefore in all these respects we are concerned to mourn over them before the Lord.---These things premised; we shall, in the *First* place, instruct the warrant of this duty. Well,

1st, It is a duty expressly required of us in Scripture :---We have the rule laid down, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. Where the Lord says concerning the people of Israel, in the day of their calamity; *If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespasss which they have trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.* Here it is plain, that, when judgments are threatened against a people, or actually executed upon them, on account of the sins of former and present generations; God has prescribed an humble confession of those sins, as a fit and effectual mean towards a turning away his anger from them. Carnal reason may suggest other means; but divine wisdom has prescribed this, as that without which no other means shall ever be effectual.

We have a remarkable passage to this purpose in Jer. xiii. 15, 16. *Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.* The judgments here threatened against a sinful people, are set forth under the notion of *darkness, and gross darkness*; as elsewhere in Scripture, Isa. viii. 22. And these judgments are here intimated to be upon the very eve of execution. But God, in sovereign goodness, points out a way to escape. And what is it? It is to

give him glory, before the stroke come: *Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.* And how are we to give him glory, so as to answer the desired end? It must be both by personal and public repentance and reformation.---It must, no doubt, be, in the *first* place, by personal repentance and reformation. Every man must repent him of his own sins, and reform himself---as to those duties incumbent upon him in his station. All public repentance and reformation must begin at home; otherwise, it is only a fair shew. But though this must have the first place, it must not have the only place. Our return to the Lord must be as public and open as our revolt from him has been. It is for sin, as a running and prevailing sore, that the Lord threatens to punish churches and nations, Isa. i. 4,---8; and we are to acknowledge it accordingly. We do not take with the charge which God has against us; we do not give him the glory of his justice in his threatenings against us, nor humble ourselves under his mighty hand---as it is lifted up against us; and consequently do not answer the call, *Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness*: unless we acknowledge those very evils for which the Lord threatens to punish us with desolating judgments; and acknowledge them too under the same consideration wherein the Lord threatens to punish them in such manner, that is, as public and predominant abominations. Now, peoples repentance is not suited to the nature of such provocations, unless it is as open and public as the provocations themselves.---It is a great mistake to set a private and personal confession of sin, in opposition unto a public and national confession of it. It is to be feared, that they who do so are as great enemies to the former, as to the latter; and that they only cover their enmity to both, with a specious shew of zeal for the one in opposition to the other. For suppose all to be hearty in mourning over their own sins and the sins of the land in secret, they could not miss to be as hearty in doing it in public. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* If the heart is burdened with a sense of sin, it will naturally burst forth into a confession of it. This is clear in the case of the Psalmist, who could find no ease in his mind till he did so, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4, 5. If the heart is grieved for the manifold dishonours done to God by ourselves and others, it cannot evite shewing it, Psal. cxix. 136. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes; because they keep not thy law.* Now, this is just the amount of the doctrine, even that all should make a free and open confession of the manifold dishonours done to God in our day.

We may add, that if you will please to look into the lxxviii psalm, you will find it to be a duty that parents are specially required

quired to inculcate upon their children ; and, to make the lesson the more effectual, to shew them an example. You may read and ponder the whole psalm. And you will see that parents are there required to teach their children such an acknowledgment of sin, as was suited to the times in which the psalm was penned. In like manner, parents are now obliged to teach their children such an acknowledgment of sin, as is suited to the times in which we live. I have taken notice of this psalm chiefly for the sake of having an opportunity to re-mind parents of their duty in this matter. And I make no doubt but they will make conscience of it, in proportion to their concern for God's glory and their children's welfare. ---The negligence of many parents in instructing their children concerning the principles of a covenanted reformation, and so concerning the awful apostasy which the generation have made from them,---is attended with three signal losses. They themselves lose the comfort of seeing their children walk in their steps ; and this the apostle John would have thought a very great loss, 3 John i. 4. *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.* Their children are hereby in eminent danger of being carried down the stream of apostasy to their ruin. And it bodes awful things to the generation : while hereby it is likely there may be few, when the present race of witnesses are off the field, to *stand before the Lord in the breach ; to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*

2dly, It is a duty we owe to God, to our neighbour, to ourselves, to posterity, and to the community of which we are members. S E R M O N II,

1. It is a duty we owe to God. He interests himself in the cause of his people, and therefore it is but reasonable that they should interest themselves in his. What hurts them, grieves him in the tenderest manner. *He that toucheth them, or does them the slightest injury,---toucheth the apple of his eye,* Zech. ii. 8. The manner of expression is metaphorical, and intimates the tenderness of his compassion : the eye being the tenderest part of the body ; and the apple of the eye, the tenderest part of the eye. *Nay, in all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them ; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old,* Isa. lxiii. 9. *For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,* Heb. iv. 15. And (which shews how deeply he reckons himself interested in the cause of his people) tho' what reflects dishonour immediately upon himself---*must be as offensive*

five to him, as that which injures them; yet it is not usually so speedily punished. That which fills up the measure of a peoples iniquity, is their persecution of God's faithful witnesses. Thus when the people of Israel *mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets,—the wrath of the Lord arose against them, till there was no remedy,* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. And thus the Jews *both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and persecuted the apostles,—forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway; till wrath came upon them to the uttermost,* 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. Persecution is a sin against the remedy, and so speaks the case to be desperate; and therefore usually brings sudden destruction.—Now, if God makes such account of the injuries done to his people, it is but a suitable return of kindness in them, to grieve for what is dishonourable to him; to mourn more for the indignities done to him, than for the wrongs done to themselves; to count on the latter as nothing, in comparison of the former,—and to lament the same before him accordingly. Gratitude must prompt them to it. Moses and Joshua were eminently of this disposition; and are set forth as such for an example to us. When the Lord threatened to disinherit the people of Israel; Moses said unto the Lord, *If thou shalt kill all this people as one man; then the nations which have heard the same of thee, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness,* Numb. xiv. 15, 16. Israel's being disinherited, though they were exceedingly beloved by Moses, was but a light thing to him, in comparison of the dishonour that would have been thereby reflected on God himself. In like manner, when Israel was smitten before Ai; *Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face, and said, Alas! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Josh. vii. 6, 7, 8, 9. There is no matter what become of our name, but let not thy name be dishonoured.—Thus there is a mutual sympathy between God and his people. He feels for them, and they feel for him. The truth is, God and his people have but one interest. He reckons on their interest as his interest; and they reckon on his interest, as their interest. He acts in their behalf accordingly; *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to see how himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him,* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. And, when they can do no more, they cannot help sighing and crying for the indignities

Indignities done to him; the opposition which is made to his kingdom, and the encroachments which are made upon his interests.

2. It is a duty we owe to our neighbour. To see a person, the generality among whom we live, a church and nation, running down the precipice of error and ungodliness to their ruin,-- might affect the hardest heart; surely they are little beholden to us, if we discern them to be in this melancholly condition, without lamenting it. *Jeremiah* did no more than was due to his own flesh; when he said, *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people*, Jer. ix. 1. It is an essential part of that charity, which the apostle so warmly recommends in 1 Cor. xiii. *Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity*. There is more understood, than expressed. Instead of rejoicing in iniquity, it is to be heartily sorry for it. In place of making light of other people's errors and defections, and thereby hardening them to their ruin, it is sincerely to lament them. If we are grieved for what are called their *misfortunes*, we should be most of all grieved for what is the worst of all misfortunes, *sin*. It is no good evidence of a neighbourly or charitable disposition, if we are not.--*Charity seeketh not her own*. It argues a selfish spirit, to say with *Cain*, *Am I my brother's keeper?* Charity disposes persons to interest themselves in the temporal, but much more in the spiritual and eternal safety of others, as well as their own; to lament their walking in the broad way, which leadeth unto destruction; and to deprecate the divine indignation in their behalf accordingly. Nay, we are hereunto required by the apostle, 1 Tim. ii. 1. *I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men*. The Greek word which we translate *supplications*, properly signifies such prayers as are made for the averting of divine punishments; which must suppose a bewailing of sin, as the procuring cause of them.

3. It is a duty we owe to ourselves. It is not more our duty than interest. It is the only sure way, to escape the punishment of prevailing sin; or to have the same blessed to us.---When sin becomes general in a church or nation, it will not fail, sooner or later, to bring the judgments of God upon them. I do not say, that all the mourners in *Zion* shall escape *in the day of visitation*. Like *Ebed-Melech* and *Baruch*, their life may be given them for a prey, in all places whither they go, Jer. xxxix. 18. xlv. 5. However, they have no absolute security for this. Nay, judgment sometimes begins at the house of God, 1 Pet. iv. 17. But they bid fairer than any others to escape. The Lord says, *it may be, ye shall be bid in the day of his anger*, Zeph. ii. 3. And his may-be

is better security than the world's most confident *shall-be*. God sometimes sets a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land, Ezek. ix. 4. *A thousand may fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand*: while the wasting calamity doth not come nigh them, Psal. xci. 7.---Nay, whatever may be their lot in the day of the common calamity, they have the absolute security of God's promise---of its being blessed to them. Even when the course of providence is so high as to be dreadful, the wheels thereof move invariably straight forward; for God's glory and his people's good, Ezek. i. 9, 18. Whatever may be the case of a careless world about them, their share in the common calamity shall be sanctified to their spiritual profit, Zech. xiii. 9. While it falls on others with the curse, it comes to them with the blessing, Prov. iii. 33.---And, even in the midst of desolating judgments, there are usually some peculiar alleviating circumstances in their case. *He stayeth his rough wind, in the day of the east-wind*, Isa. xxvii. 8. *The Lord has said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to intreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction*, Jer. xv. 11. Thus Jeremiah was taken peculiar notice of, first by the king of Judah---during the siege of Jerusalem, and then by the king of Babylon---after the city was taken.---But what is of far greater consequence than all these, they hereby keep their garments clean in the day of sinning. One of two things is certain. Either we mourn for the public abominations, or not. If we do not mourn for them, we are sure to be hardened by them; and consequently to be involved in deep guiltiness. For example, when we hear God's name blasphemed; either we are filled with indignation at the dishonour hereby done to God,---or we contract an indifferency and overlinefs of spirit, and so are partakers with our neighbour in his sin: either we enter our protest in heaven against it, by mourning over it before the Lord,---or we let it go as it comes without any resentment, and so become like unto him. The like observation might be made, concerning all the various ways whereby God's name is dishonoured. Farther, they have hereby the promise of being kept from sinning in the day of suffering, Rev. iii. 10. *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*. Now, to be kept from sin in a time of such snares, as both a time of general defection and a time of common calamity must be, is undoubtedly a signal mercy; and will be esteemed as such, by all who have the fear of God before their eyes;

4. It is a duty we owe to posterity. If we will look rightly in-

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to the scripture, we will find that there is a two-fold testimony, (or rather two parts of the same testimony) which we are required to transmit to posterity; a testimony to the truths of God, and a testimony against the sins of the times. And indeed there can be no due maintenance of the truth, without testifying against what deviations are made from it. For example, we do not maintain the prerogatives of Christ, unless we testify against what encroachments are made upon them. The very maintenance of the former is a condemnation of the latter. Now, the most proper way of bearing our testimony against the sins of the times, and a way that lies open to all,---is a mourning over them before the Lord; hereby entering our protest in heaven against them, and giving the most solemn warning to posterity to beware of the like. This is the appointed mean of transmitting the truths of God pure and entire to posterity; as appears from Psal. lxxviii. 1,--3. compared with the subsequent part of the psalm. What is matter of sorrow to us, may be supposed to be matter of dread to them. While what is matter of no concern to us, it is to be feared, may be as little to them.---Further, as was formerly shewed, the sins of one generation frequently bring the judgments of God upon another. In this case, it is our indispensable duty, to acknowledge our own sins and the sins of the land; to deprecate the divine indignation in behalf of ourselves and posterity,---that so we may not be their ruin. And though all will not join with us herein, this doth not hinder its being our duty to clear ourselves of any guiltiness in the matter.

5. It is a duty we owe to the community of which we are members, whether as a church or commonwealth. The sins of individuals,---whether those that are properly their own personal sins, or their particular share in the public abominations,---are sometimes punished in this world, and sometimes suffered to go with impunity; as God sees necessary to the ends of his glory. It is in the other world especially, that the Lord reckons with persons in this capacity. But the sins of communities, whether of churches or nations, are, unless repented of, always punished in this world. Communities are purely temporal, have no existence but in this world; so that they must either be punished in this world, or not at all. And the maintenance of God's moral government in the world, makes it necessary that they should be so: if it is not supported by their obedience to the precepts of his law; it must, in case of impenitence, be supported by their subjection to its penalties. Thus, prevailing abominations bring down the judgments of God on a people; nothing but repentance and reformation can prevent their ruin.---Now, to do what in us lies, to prevent desolation

folation from coming on the land in which we live, is a debt we owe thereunto, as being members of the same body. Well, how is this to be done? It is by acknowledging the public guiltiness, justifying God in all his threatenings against a sinful people, and deprecating his indignation in their behalf. Sin makes a breach between a holy God and a sinful people; and it is the business of all who discern this, in this manner to cast themselves into the breach. This is clear in the example of Moses, on more occasions than one, *Exod. xxxiv. 9. Numb. xiv. 11, — 19.* In the case here supposed, *The Lord seeks for a man among a sinful people, to make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before him for the land, that he should not destroy it, Ezek. xxii. 30.* And he complains upon the prophets of Israel, as being foolish, and like the foxes in the deserts; because they had not gone up into the gaps; neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord, *Ezek. xiii. 3, 4, 5.*—Such a course has sometimes prevailed. For the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, *Jam. v. 16.* God said that he would destroy Israel, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them, *Psal. cvi. 23.* A few righteous Lots, who vex their righteous souls from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the people among whom they live, (*2 Pet. ii. 8.*)—may prevail towards a turning away the fierce wrath of the world, *Gen. xviii. 32.*—But melancholly is the state of that people among whom there is none such found, *Ezek. xxii. 30, 31.* And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land that I should not destroy it: but I found none.—Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord.

3dly, It is a duty for which we have the best examples.

1. The most eminent saints have been remarkable for it. *Ezek. xiv. 14.* Noah, Daniel, and Job, are spoken of as singularly eminent; though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls, by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. In *Jer. xv. 1.* Moses and Samuel bear the same eminent character; though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people. It is here supposed, that if any could prevail, they could. And how came they to have such interest at the court of heaven? How comes the Spirit of God to take such peculiar notice of them? They mourned for the sins of their times; their practice was one continued acknowledgment of the evil of them; nor were they wanting in their

their fervent intercessions to God in behalf of their people. This is plainly enough implied in the singular notice taken of them, in the passages just now referred to. And it is still more evident concerning some of them—at least in the history which the scripture gives of their lives. *Noah was perfect in his generations*, Gen. vi. 9. †; and to be a mourner for the sins of the times, is an eminent branch of such perfection. He would have been wanting in his duty to God and his generations, if he had not sighed and cried for the abominations done in his times. He was not a *preacher of righteousness*, without lamenting the abounding of unrighteousness. *Daniel* was eminently exemplary in this matter, as is to be seen in the ix chapter of his book. *Job* seems to have been much the same in his day, that *Noah* was in his. Every body knows *Moses* to have been singularly eminent in this duty. And *Samuel's* life seems to have been one continued course of wrestling against a torrent of corruption.

We shall only mention three others at the time; *David*, *Jeremiah* and *Josiah*. As to *David*, we have two remarkable passages. The first is in Psalm cxix. 136. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.* The other is in Psalm cxxxix, 21, 22. *Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.* Both bespeak the intenseness of his sorrow. *Rivers of waters*—is an hyperbolical speech, expressive of the exceeding greatness of his grief. Such was the depth of his concern, that he could appeal to the Searcher of hearts about the sincerity of it. And you will observe, it was not his own sin, but the sins of others, which was the cause of this his trouble. Nor was it any injury they had done to him, but the dishonour they had done to God, which gave him so much grief. He expresses his hatred of them, not as enemies to himself, but as enemies to God: their contrariety to God was the cause, and consequently the object of his hatred. As to *Jeremiah*, you have a remarkable passage, among many that might be mentioned, chap. ix. 1. *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.* He is usually

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† This is to be “A mourner for the sins of others. Such a one will not think himself unconcerned in the sins of the generation wherein he lives. He sees God is dishonoured, his wrath is provoked, the souls of the sinners are thereby put to the utmost hazard, and his own soul is in hazard of being held consenting thereto. So love to God, to his neighbour, and to himself, kindles in his soul a real grief and sorrow for the sins of the generation.” See a sermon of Mr Boston's on Gen. vi. 9.

ally stiled the *weeping prophet*, and with good reason. The sinfulness of his people made such a deep impression upon him, that he scarce thought he could mourn too frequently or too vehemently for them. These were all mourners for the sins of the times,—and so are for an example to us in the substance of the duty here pleaded for.—As to *Josiah*, we have a passage exactly to the purpose in 2 Chron. xxxiv. 19,—31. “ It came to pass when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. And he commanded,—saying, Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel:—for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord.—And they that the King had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess,—who answered them; Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me:—Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place.” And far from satisfying himself with mourning over the public abominations, in his closet or family only,—“ he sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And he went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the Levites, and all the people great and small: And he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant.—And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.” Thus the grief of his heart issued in a public acknowledgment, and a public acknowledgment in solemn covenanting: and so it ought, and so it might be supposed, to do in all. That concern which is all seen, is all naught: but that which is not seen at all, is all nothing.

2. The churches of God in reforming times have been remarkable for it. We have the example of the church of Israel, in Jehoshaphat's time, 2 Chron. xx. in *Ezra's* time, chap. viii. ix. x. and in *Nehemiah's* time, chap. ix. x. And it is observable, that none of them were obliged to fasting at the times wherein they are here said to fast, by any law of the Mosaic œconomy; but

but that they assembled of their own accord, as being specially warranted hereunto by the calls of providence. The date of Nehemiah's fast puts this beyond all doubt concerning it, as we observed in our entry upon this subject. Nor is it less plain concerning the other three mentioned in the passages just now referred to. Jehoshaphat's fast was purely occasional. "There came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria, and behold, they be in Hazazon-Tamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, *accordingly*, to ask help of the Lord," in the present imminent distress. Ezra's fasts were precisely of the same kind. It was the difficulties which he and his company were in, which made them fast at the river *Abava*. "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Abava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good, that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was intreated of us." It was Israel's joining in affinity with the people of the lands, which made him and the other mourners in Zion fast, as in chap. ix. 1,--4. "The princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands.—For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and pluckt off the hair of my head, and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgressions of those that had been carried away." Thus these fasts were purely occasional, as indeed the far greatest part we read of in Scripture were: the native consequence of which is, that herein they were for an example to us.

Accordingly, our ancestors in reforming times have been remarkable for it. Here I might relate the practice of those who, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, contended for a further reformation of the church,—and who for this reason were nicknamed

Puritans,

Puritans. These noble worthies contended with those in power, for having things brought back to the standard of Scripture,—by petitions, complaints, remonstrances, and sufferings. And they wrestled with him, in whose hand the hearts of all men are,—by frequent fastings; bewailing the sins of the times; and spreading forth the case before the Lord, when they could do no more: which is the very thing we are here pleading for, as what we are specially called unto at this day.—I might also mention how their posterity, in the last century, were not more remarkable for their wrestlings with their king and his evil counsellors, than for solemn fastings and prayers to a throne of grace; justly concluding, that the sins of the land were the prime source of all their miseries. Beside extraordinary fasting on any pressing exigence, a monthly fast was observed for several years by both houses of Parliament; by the *Westminster* Assembly, by the city of *London*, and by the mourners in *Zion* through the whole land. And God was with them, while they were with him.—I might also name several remarkable times for fasting and humiliation in *Scotland*. The 1596 is among the most remarkable this way, particularly in ecclesiastical judicatories. It began in the General Assembly which was held that year. Having made a particular condescendence of the sins and corruptions of all estates, of court and country, and particularly of the ministry; they appointed a day of solemn fasting and humiliation to be observed on account of them. Accordingly, they convened in one of the churches of *Edinburgh* for the purpose, with a goodly number of elders and select christians who were desirous of joining with them therein. The minister, who was appointed to preside on that solemn occasion, after prayer, caused read, according to the custom of those times, the iii and xxxiii chapters of *Ezekiel*; which were, no doubt, highly proper to the occasion. And having made intimation of the design of their being assembled together; he exhorted them to enter deeply into their own hearts, to search and try their ways, to confess their sins,—with firm resolutions of amendment. While they were for sometime employed in this exercise,—they were so wonderfully assisted with a plentiful out-pouring of the Spirit of grace and supplications, that nothing almost was to be heard but sighs and groans; so that the place might have been worthily called *Bochim*: for the like of that day had not been seen in *Scotland* since the reformation, as every one that was present confessed. There had been many days of humiliation for present judgment, or imminent dangers, says the historian; † but the like for sin and defection had

† Calderwood's History, p. 314,—318.

had never been since the reformation. After a public and joint confession, and a sermon (on Luke xii. 22.) suited to the occasion; the moderator required them to signify their firm purpose of reformation in the particulars acknowledged by them: which they did with great chearfulness and unanimity; holding up their right hands to the Lord with that seriousness and weight, as was a moving sight to all that were present. The like practice was, by appointment of the Assembly, observed in synods and presbyteries; and in the generality of congregations. — The year 1638 was another remarkable time for solemn humiliation. The national covenant was sworn, in a bond suited to the circumstances of the time, at *Edinburgh*, on the 1st of March; by several thousands of the chief of the nobility, gentry, burgeses and ministers: and before the latter end of April, by all the congregations in *Scotland*, excepting only a few. And as the General Assembly in the year 1640, in their letter to the churches of *Helvetia*, say; “ when they began to descend deep into themselves, and thoroughly search their own hearts: the remembrance of their breach of covenant stung, wounded and pierced through their consciences: wherefore being moved with serious repentance, they resolved to renew their covenant, or national confession; which they did, on a day of solemn fasting, with uplifted hands, and with many sighs and groans.” And methinks it was the most glorious sight that ever *Scotland* afforded: To behold the nobility, the barons, the burgeses, the ministers and commons, all in tears for their breach of covenant, for their own and the land’s backslidings; and at the same time returning with great joy unto the Lord, in the way of swearing fealty and allegiance unto him. And it was sworn in like manner through all the country. Godly Mr *Livingston* tells us, in his life written by himself, that he had seen above a thousand lifting up their hands to the Lord at once, and not a dry face amongst them. — And sometime before this, while the apostasy generally prevailed thro’ the land, and while the work of reformation was sadly borne down by the prevailing party; the godly and faithful were frequent in solemn fastings; bewailing the sins of the times, and beseeching the Lord for a revival of his work. This was a special mean of keeping them awake in that night of apostasy. On these occasions, which were signally blessed of the Lord, a seed was begotten unto him, which afterwards appeared vigorously in his cause. And the Lord gave a signal evidence of his approbation of those mourners in Zion, by the surprising appearance which he made for them in the year 1638. — Many instances more might be given, but these may suffice for a swatch.

Thus,

Thus, this duty comes recommended unto us by the best of examples.

4thly, A disposition hereunto is inlaid in the new nature, nay, and even in humanity itself. It is the part of humanity, to be sorry for whatever hurts our fellow creatures. And it is the part of Christianity, to sanctify and cultivate this noble disposition. Thus the people of God, so far as they act either like men or Christians, cannot but sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the midst of the land.

1. Because sin is contrary to their nature. The hearts of the saints are (*cast into the mould of the doctrine of Christ,*) Rom. vi. 17. *God puts his laws into their mind, and writes them in their hearts,* Heb. viii. 10. The truths and laws of God, in this case, are a piece of themselves, as it were. What we eat and drink, becomes corporally a part of our substance. What truths we believe and love, become spiritually a part of our souls. Now, it is impossible but the saints must resent, with grief and indignation, what is contrary to that which is so much a part of themselves. They will do so, so far as they are themselves.

2. Because God's glory is dearer to them than all things else. All their own interests are subordinated to his glory. It is their genuine disposition, so far as they are renewed by divine grace, to be mild in their own cause, and zealous in God's. To set them right in this matter, is the great end of their sanctification by the Holy Ghost. And being endued with this disposition, they cannot but be grieved for whatever is dishonourable to God. In conformity to their Head, *the zeal of God's house eats them up; and the reproaches of them that reproach him, fall upon them,* Psal. lxxix.

9. It argues a baseness of spirit, below the dignity of Christians, to seek our own things, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

3. They are public spirited, and so cannot but be affected with grief for what hurts the public good. It argues a mean spirit not to be so, even in matters of temporal concern; much more, in matters of eternal consequence. Who that has any regard for the church of God, can see her privileges invaded, or hedges broken down, without lamenting it? See how pathetically it is lamented, Psal. lxxx. throughout. See the genuine disposition of a Christian in Psal. cxxxviii. 5, 6. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.* Who that has any bowels of compassion, can see their fellow-creatures *rushing on the thick bosses of God's bucklers,* without bemoaning their melancholy case? Horror seizes them, in a reflection on what must be the dreadful issue, Psal.

cxix: 53. *Horror hath taken hold on me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.* Humanity itself says, that it argues a worse than brutish cruelty, not to be affected with it.

4. They are farther-sighted than the rest of the world, Prov. xxii. 3, *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.* A careless world do not foresee the judgments of God, which they are bringing upon themselves and the land; and so go on in security, till a midnight alarm awakens them, 1 Theff. v. 3. The people of God, if grace is in any measure of exercise, foresee the desolation which sin is bringing upon a land, and lament it. Nay, and the more hardened the generation be in security, it is so much the more a matter of grief to them; after the example of *Jeremiah*, chap. xiii. 17. *But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.* And how can any but do so, who bear any love to their country?—There are two ways in which desolating judgments may be foreseen coming on a land:—in the causes *naturally* producing such an effect; such as, luxury, prodigality, effeminacy, selfishness, faction, and the like: and in the causes *morally* producing such an effect; such as, a decay of religion, defection from attained-to reformation, a despising the calls of God's word to return to him, security, and the like. A natural sagacity is sufficient to discern judgment coming in the former case. But it requires a due attention to the threatenings of God's word, to discern it in the latter.

Thus a disposition to mourn over the sins of the times,—is not only a special principle of the new nature, but even of humanity itself.

After all, such is the mournful degeneracy of the times, that all concern of this sort is reproached as Jewish, hypocritical, and superfluous. But

1. There is not the least shadow of reason for traducing it, as *Jewish*. All the preceding arguments are of a moral nature; and shew it to be neither peculiar to the Old Testament nor the New, but common to both. To which we shall subjoin the following considerations.

(1.) It is a duty plainly dictated by the light of nature. The men of *Niniveh* needed no farther call to it, but the denunciation of God's judgments by *Jonah*. *He cried and said, Yet forty days and Niniveh shall be overthrown.* And presently the light of nature dictated to them, what was their duty in this imminent danger. *So the people of Niniveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even unto the least*
of

of them, Jonah iii. 4, 5. They must therefore be blinder than Heathens, who deny the warrantableness or necessity of it.—Plainly, it is not properly an instituted ordinance, but a moral duty dictated by the natural conscience; and divine revelation directs to the right performance of it: and consequently, it is incumbent on the church in all dispensations, according to the calls of providence thereunto. We are assured therefore, that the duty itself will stand its ground, as long as there is any thing of conscience in the world,—whatever difference there may be about the causes for which we ought to humble ourselves before the Lord.

(2.) It is foretold and promised to take place in New Testament times. Among the many passages that might be produced, we shall only mention one, viz. Zech. xii. 10,—14. “And I will
 “pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall
 “look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn
 “for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born.
 “In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as
 “the mourning of Hada-drimmon in the valley of Megiddon.
 “And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of
 “the house of David apart, and their wives apart: the family
 “of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart: the
 “family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the
 “families that remain, every family apart, and their wives
 “apart.”—That this passage refers to New Testament times, is certain. Nay, that it has a special respect to the general conversion of the Jews in the last days, is most probable.—The latter part of it is generally supposed to refer to family-fasting. But if it is incumbent on a family; why not on a congregation? why not on a whole nation? And even supposing family-fasting to be directly intended here, a joint confession of sin to the glory of God is hereby warranted and enjoined; which is a sufficient authority for the meeting together of a congregation, or even of a whole nation (if it was practicable) for that purpose.—However, I suppose, it is a mistake to think, that what we commonly call family-fasting, is the only or even the principal thing contained in these words. The plain scope of the place is, to shew that there should be not only a partial, but an universal mourning. It is expressly said, that *the land shall mourn*. Four principal families are instanced in, as setting an example to the rest; two of them royal families, and two of them sacred families. The prophet speaks

speaks in the stile of those times. Now, a family in Old-Testament language, signifies not merely the dwellers together in one house; but all the descendents of the person whose family it is said to be. Thus *the family of the house of David* signifies all his descendents by *Solomon*. *The family of the house of Nathan* comprehends all his descendents by *Nathan*; the other branch of his house, and which seems to have been more illustrious in after times than the former, Luke iii. 27,—31. *The family of the house of Levi* includes in general the posterity of *Levi*. *The family of the house of Shimei* signifies his descendents by *Shimei*; one of his grandsons, and the founder of a family, 1 Chron. vi. 16, 17.—This interpretation is verified by the manner of expression here used, while one family is said to have more wives than one in it; *the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart*. Their wives are said to mourn *apart*: either because, according to the custom of the Jews, and of some others too in those times, the men and women worshipped in separate companies; or, because, on this mournful occasion, husbands and wives should not indulge themselves in one another's company,—but forbearing all carnal satisfactions, should give themselves wholly to fasting and prayer. See 1 Cor. vii. 5.—We shall only further observe here, that the chief cause of this great mourning appears to be the guilt of their fathers in crucifying the Son of God; while it is promised, *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn, &c.* See Rev. i. 7. They said, *His blood be on us and on our children*. Their children came now to feel the weight of of this horrible imprecation, and mourn over it before the Lord accordingly. So here is a plain example of a solemn acknowledgment of public sins, particularly of the sins of our fathers.

(3.) We have the example of the saints under the New Testament. *Paul was in fastings often*, 2 Cor. xi. 27. And what one cause hereof was, he himself tells us, Phil. iii. 18. *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ!* That he was a deep mourner, particularly for the unbelief and obduracy of his own people and nation, he himself attests in the most solemn manner, Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3. And he finds fault with the church of *Corinth*, that they were *puffed up, and had not rather mourned*, for the sins of the incestuous person among them, 1 Cor. v. 2. And he afterwards expresses his joy, that, in obedience to his exhortation, *they had sorrowed to repentance*, 2 Cor. vii. 9. Further, we have the example of the *two witnesses*, that is, the godly and faithful during the reign of Antichrist, Rev. xi. 3. *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred*

and threeſcore days clothed in ſackcloth †; which, beſide the poverty and miſery of their outward condition, is doubtleſs to be underſtood of their mourning for the ſins of the times, particularly the abominations of the Antichriſtian ſtate. Thus we have the example of *Paul*, of the church of *Corinth*, nay, and of *the whole church* of the faithful in the times of Popery.

(4.) It is recommended to our very higheſt eſteem, by the example of Chriſt himſelf. The ſinfulneſs of the times was matter of the greateſt ſorrow to him. Mark iii. 5. *He looked round about on the people with anger, being grieved for the hardneſs of their hearts.* *Jeruſalem's* obſtinacy in ſin, with the judgments which he foreſaw would follow thereupon, drew tears from his bleſſed eyes. *When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it: ſaying, If thou haſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace.* Luke xix. 41, 42. Thus we have his example in the ſubſtance of the duty here pleaded for. Conſequently,

2. There can be no ground for reproaching it, as *hypocritical*. Whoever perform this or any other duty hypocritically, let them bear

† *Sackcloth* is uſed here in a metaphorical ſenſe, as in various other places of Scripture; to denote the temper of ſpirit intimated by ſuch attire.—*Sackcloth* was the mourning of the ancients. We find it worn, in token of mourning for the death of relations and friends, Gen. xxxvii. 34. 2 Sam. iii. 31. And it is certainly more natural for people to afflict themſelves on ſuch occasions, by the wearing of coarſe and rough clothing as ſackcloth,—than to dreſs themſelves more finely than ordinary, according to the modern faſhion. And we find it worn on occaſion of any great calamity, whether only threatened or actually inflicted, Jonah iii. 5, 6. 1 Chron. xxi. 16. It ſeems to have been the common wear on days of faſting and humiliation, 1 Kings xxi. 27. Neh. ix. 1. And the Lord teſtifies his diſpleaſure with thoſe who acted with ſo little regard to the rules of decency, as to wear a gaudy attire on ſuch mournful occaſions, Iſa. iii. 16,—26. xxi. 12, 13, 14.

We might obſerve, by the bye, That no where in the Old or New Teſtament do we find it either worn or preſcribed to be worn by perſons making confeſſions of their ſins before the church: the remembrance of *sackcloth* had almoſt drawn me into the popiſh phraſe, *doing penance for their ſins*. Lepers were after a ſort excommunicated; and yet no where have I obſerved it to have been worn by them. We have inſtances of perſons being appointed to make public confeſſion of their ſins, but never with ſackcloth, Lev. v. 5. Numb. v. 6, 7. *David* made public confeſſion of his ſin, Pſal. li. title; but there is no evidence he did it in ſackcloth. See Gilleſpie's *Aaron's Rod Bleſſing*, p. 73.—82.—Thus to wear ſackcloth, for mourning, and on faſt-days,—would be an imitation of the antient Iſraelites. But to preſcribe it as the peculiar garb of penitents when making confeſſion of their ſins before the church,—ſeems to have been introduced at firſt through a miſtake of antiquity,—and to have been retained afterwards, through a ſuperſtitious regard to antiquity.

bear their own blame. But let not the duty itself be reproached on their account; nor let any be charged with hypocrisy, merely for aiming at the performance of it. Whoever do so, must stand chargeable with imputing the worst of all crimes to the most eminent saints in all ages; nay, and even to Christ himself.

3. It is far wrong to object against it, as *superfluous*. For tho' our first and most special business is, to mourn for our own sins; yet, even in point of interest, as well as of duty, we are obliged to mourn over the sins of others also. Who knows not, that every one's private interest is wrapt up in the public welfare? the better religion thrives in the land in general; the more it bids fair to thrive with every Christian in particular. Again, who knows not, that his own house is in danger, when his neighbour's is on fire? just so, when error and ungodliness prevail, we are in imminent danger of being infected with the contagion. *Evil communications corrupt good manners*; and *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. The truth is, there is no security against the infection, but in the way of lamenting the spreading of it. Indifferency is the next step to a being smitten with the common leprosy. Thus to mourn over the public sinfulness, is the only effectual way to consult our own personal interest. — It is of further use still. When a testimony for the truth falls to the ground; when there are few or none to mourn over this, to confess the generations sinfulness, to acknowledge the justice of the divine threatenings against them, and to deprecate the divine indignation in behalf of a guilty land: God is, to speak so, laid under a necessity, for the manifestation of his righteousness, — *to do his work, his strange work; to bring to pass his act, his strange act*. Whereas while there is a remnant to cleave to the Lord and his way, to bemoan the land's guiltiness, to acknowledge that God would be just though he should make the land desolate, to cast themselves into the breach by fervent prayers and intercessions to a God of mercy; it is plain, there is not the same necessity, for the vindication of God's providence, that he should *make a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land*. Thus, for as little as this backsliding generation thinks of a testimony to the borne-down truths of Christ, — which is to be managed especially in the way of mourning over the evils which we cannot reform; whenever it falls to the ground, — and there is none to stand in the breach, one of two things will be the inevitable consequence; either the Lord's giving up with us, or a speedy execution of his judgments. And for saying so, we have the authority of that word which will not fail, Isa. i. 7, *Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have*

have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah †. ---It is of nobler use still. It is eminently for the glory of God. The confession of sin does honour to God. Hence, *Joshua* says to *Achan*; *My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him*, Josh. vii. 16. And hence the people of Israel are required to give glory unto him, by an acknowledgment of the sins of the land, Jer. xiii. 16. To confess the indignity done to him by sin, is all we can do for repairing his injured honour.

Secondly, We shall consider the matter

SERMON III. of a solemn acknowledgment of sin. And here we shall, 1st, make some general remarks; 2^{dly}, offer an explication of some passages of the *acknowledgment of sins* prefixed to the *bond* for renewing our SOLEMN COVENANTS.

1st, We shall offer some general remarks. And a solemn acknowledgment of sin must be full and particular, and the matter thereof must be certain and perspicuous.

I. It

† These lands have been long warned of the approach of judgments; judgments of a more desolating nature than any we have been hitherto visited with. And because they have not come so soon as many have feared, and as the warnings given by the Lord's servants seemed to import; the generation are hardened in a course of sin, and are ready to conclude that all such warnings are groundless and delusive. But the very reverse heretof is the improvement we ought to make of God's long suffering patience with us, 2 Pet. iii. 3,—10. Warnings of God's judgments are not absolute predictions of what shall infallibly take place; but declarations of the intrinsic demerit of the land's sinfulness,—and of what they may lay their account with, if the Lord keep his ordinary way with such sinful churches and nations. Now, such warnings have been a special mean of lengthening out the day of our merciful visitation: and that two ways; *first*, as declarations of God's righteousness,—and so as vindications of the justice of his moral government, under all his forbearance with us; *secondly*, as means of preventing the torrent of iniquity from rising to such a height as it might otherwise have done. *They that forsake the law, praise the wicked*,—and so corrupt and ruin them: *but such as keep the law, contend with them*; are a check upon them, and warn them of their danger,—and so are a mean of saving some, and of preventing others from running to all that excess of wickedness they might otherwise have run to. In which respects, the saints are said to be *the salt of the earth*; as allaying the stench of corruption, even as salt preserves from putrefaction. And bad as the world is, it would be vastly worse, were it not for such contendings of the godly.—Thus the threatenings of God's judgments and the delay of them for a time, are perfectly reconcileable. But such as despise warnings, because they do not see them speedily executed, like those mentioned, Eccles. viii. 12. had need to take care lest by doing so they speedily undeceive themselves, 1 Thess. v. 3.

1. It must be full : that is, we must make confession of all our sins, with all the aggravating circumstances attending them, without hiding or palliating them. Individuals must do so; otherwise, the Lord has plainly told them, they cannot find acceptance with him, Psal lxvi. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* And in like manner churches and nations must do so. One *Achan* in the camp may trouble the whole congregation of the Lord. The Lord requires a thorough repentance and reformation, Jer. iv. 1 *If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me : and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.* In this respect, there was a signal defect in *Jehu's* reformation. He destroyed *Baal* out of *Israel*. Here was a practical acknowledgment of the evil of idolatry. *Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them ; to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan,* 2 Kings x. 28, 29. Here was a practical hiding of the evil of superstition. In like manner, there was a remarkable defect in the reformation of *England*. They reformed from Antichristian idolatry, but not from superstition. They reformed in point of gospel-doctrine, but not in point of church-government and discipline. Here was a practical acknowledgment of some sins, but a hiding of others†. Nor was there a full and free acknowledgment of the several steps of defection, in the last persecuting times, made by our ancestors in *Scotland* at the late merciful revolution; which, I am apt to think, has been the source of the torrent of apostacy that has prevailed there ever since. And the threatening is now in a sad measure accomplished, Mal. ii. 8, 9. *But ye are departed out of the way : ye have caused many to stumble at the law : ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.*

2. It must be particular. *David* was particular in the acknowledgment of his sin, Psal. li. And we have several examples of particular acknowledgments made by the whole church, as in Psal. lxxviii. cvi. Neh. ix. However, it is not hereby intended, that any

† It is not hereby intended to disparage the well-meant endeavours of the first reformers. It is certain they designed to have proceeded farther. A noble zeal for reformation prevailed in the reign of good King *Edward VI.* And as an evidence of this, a passage was left in the preface of one of their service-books to this purpose; *That they had gone as far as they could in re-forming the church, considering the times they lived in, and hoped they that came after them would, as they might, do more.* See *Neal's history of the Puritans*, vol. i. p. 79, 80.

any person can make out a particular enumeration of all the sins with which he stands chargeable; the most faultless have reason to confess, with *David*, Psal. xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.* Nor is it hereby supposed, that a church deeply involved in a course of sin and defection can condescend upon all the instances of apostacy she has fallen into. But these two things are necessary. (1.) That there be no disposition to hide or palliate sin,---but a desire to find it out, and to confess it. Without this, our repentance cannot be sincere. (2.) That there be as particular an enumeration of the several steps of defection as may be. There is a deceit in generals. It is not enough to confess, *We have sinned*, without descending to particulars. Leading instances at least---must be condescended on; and such leading instances as may be inclusive of all the rest. This is done in the *acknowledgment of sins* prefixed to the Bond. The particularity of it indeed is a principal objection against it, in the judgment of this *Laodicean* generation; but to those who are of a disposition to mourn for the sins of the times, it must be a chief excellency of it.

3. The matter of a solemn acknowledgment of sins must be *certain*; certain in itself, and certain to us; matter of fact, and what we know to be so.---However, we are to beware of carrying this matter beyond due bounds. Every thing is not capable of the same sort of evidence: some of the most undoubted truths are not capable of mathematical demonstration; and yet one may attain to abundant certainty about them. No truth is capable of any other sort of proof, but what is suited to its nature. Thus historical facts are mostly capable of no other proof, but credible testimony; and yet there is often no manner of reason to hesitate about the truth of them. I have not the same sort of certainty, that there is such a country as *America*,---as I have that there is such a country as *Britain*; yet methinks I am just as certain of the one as of the other. I have another sort of certainty of things I have seen with mine own eyes, than of things that happened before I was born; yet I can as little doubt of some of the latter, as of the former.---The truth is, when one has as good evidence of a thing, as the thing itself is capable of, or as he could be supposed to have upon the supposition of its existence; he cannot in reason make any doubt of it. If this is not allowed, there can be little or no certainty in the world.---Now, though the facts named in the *acknowledgment of sins* be capable only of proof by testimony; yet they are as well attested as things of the same nature can be supposed to be; we have even as good evidence for the truth of them, as we could have---supposing them to be true: and

and no reasonable person can desire a better. The *acknowledgment of sins*, I say, consists of incontestible matters of fact. For,

(1.) It was agreed to by the Lord's servants, met in his name, after the most diligent and deliberate search; and after solemn fasting and prayer to the Lord for direction, in various meetings of presbytery. This may be of its own weight; though, I do not say, it is absolutely conclusive.

(2.) The far greatest part of the facts named therein, lies in the public authentic records of the kingdom †. And if we may not look upon these as certain, there can be no certainty at all of any thing that is past.

(3.) They have now above twenty-four years lain open to public view, without so much as any one of them being plainly contradicted.---It is true, some of those who assisted in the framing of the *acknowledgment of sins*, but who afterwards made defection from their former profession; and consequently who neither wanted will nor ability to find out the mistakes thereof, if there had been any to be found: some of these, I say, have pretended to find a number of mistakes in it. And yet, on a narrow inspection, all their ado turns out rather to a mistaking of naked facts, with a violent wresting of their genuine meaning, (which is a sad way of hardening the generation in their sin,)---than to a plain or direct denial of the truth of those facts; which is a mournful evidence of the truth of them.

(4.) The far greatest part of this generation are so far from denying the facts named in the *acknowledgment of sins*, that they are ready to maintain them to be no evils at all, but good and commendable things. The controversy between them and us is not about the truth or falshood of the narration, but about the good or evil of the things narrated. Thus for example, the generality in our day are so far from refusing that the reformation between 1638 and 1650 was past by in the revolution settlement, that they are ready to allow of it as a very innocent thing to have passed it by.

If any should insist on something more than human testimony for the truth of what is made matter of confession to God: it is plain they hereby deny the duty of all confession of the sins of their fathers,---even of those sins which God threatens to *visit to the third and fourth generation*; nay, or even of the present generation,---except it may be of those which they have seen with their own

† This will be manifested, when we come to the particulars of the *acknowledgment of sins*.

own eyes.---But I am much mistaken, if the church of the Jews, whose practice in this matter stands on record as approved of God, had, in many cases, any other sort of evidence for the facts narrated by them in their acknowledgments,---than we have of the facts named in the *acknowledgment of sins*. It is confessed, we have a quite other sort of evidence for the truth of them, now when they are inserted in the canon of holy scripture; but the question is, If they had any other evidence for the truth of them, at the time when they made the acknowledgment recorded? It does not appear, that those, who, in *Ezekiel's* day, *sighed and cried for all the abominations done in the midst of Jerusalem*,---the sins of their fathers and the sins of the present generation; as indeed without including both these, they could not have answered the undoubted and confessed duty of those times: I say, it does not appear, that they had any other sort of evidence for the truth of *those abominations*,---than we have of the evils of our times. Did they mourn for none of the sins of their people, but such as their own eye-sight or their prophets assured them of? Was not the testimony of credible witnesses deemed sufficient by them? they must have judged it sufficient according to the divine law, Deut. xix. 15. *At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses shall every matter be established*. See 2 Cor. xiii. 1. We have a plain example of *procedure* according to this rule, in *Josiah* and the church in his time. The book of the law, which was found and read, contained the law according to which they and their fathers ought to have walked. The well-known state of matters for many years back---left them no room to doubt of the disconformity of their fathers, and their own consciences bore witness to their own disconformity---to this rule. So without any more ado, in the way of looking or seeking for farther evidence of the melancholy fact, they presently humble themselves before the Lord. It is particularly observed of the good *Josiah*, that so soon as *he heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes, humbled himself and wept before the Lord*. He did not send to *Huldah* the prophetess, to get farther evidence of the sins of his father's and grandfather's times; but taking the melancholly state of matters (known by credible testimony) for-granted,---he sends to inquire what was the mind of God in the present awful conjuncture. See 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14,---34.

4. The matter of a solemn acknowledgment of sin must be perspicuous; it must be so in itself, and it must be so to those who join therein. It is necessary that an acknowledgment of public sins, such as that which is prefixed to the Bond for the renovation of our solemn Covenants, be as plain as possible,---that all may
join

join in it with knowledge and understanding. And I make no doubt but they whose minds are not clouded and biased with carnal interests and prejudices, may, in the diligent use of means, and under the influence of the Spirit of truth, attain to a competent understanding thereof. It is necessary that persons have some knowledge of the things therein condescended on, as really evils to be mourned over before the Lord. But it is not necessary that they have such a thorough understanding of them, as to be capable of answering all the cavils of adversaries against them. It is sufficient to a genuine mourning over them before the Lord, and to a steadfast testifying against them,—to have the conscience satisfied about the sinfulness of them, by the light of God's word, and the guidance of his Spirit *; while the highest measure of mere speculative knowledge about them—will be of no avail to either.

We may further add here, that though it would be highly improper to introduce matters of doubtful disputation into an acknowledgment of sins; yet we must not look upon every thing in that light which is called such by this Laodicean generation. Matters are come to that melancholly pass, that every thing almost is disputed; nay, such is the laxness and indifferency of many in these last and perilous times, that the far greatest part of the principles of the reformation, whether in point of doctrine, worship, discipline or government,—is allowed to be controvertible points. Many are even zealous for the indifferency of those very doctrines, which our ancestors reckoned to be worthy of their lives. But we must be so far from yielding to the stream in this matter, that it ought to be matter of the deepest lamentation to us, that any should do so. The several evils condescended upon in the acknowledgement of sins, are such as are evident defections from attained-to reformation, manifest breaches of our Solemn Covenants †: And instead of looking on those as mat-

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* See more of this, with an answer to an ordinarily cavil, in the last sermon.

† If any should ask, What we understand by a covenanted reformation? we answer; Those things which have been received by the Church of Scotland, as the reformation intended and sworn unto in the Solemn League and Covenant. In the said covenant, persons of all ranks in Scotland, England and Ireland swore to *endeavour to bring the churches of God in these three kingdoms, to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church-government, directory for worship and catechising.* Accordingly, the Westminster Assembly, with Commissioners from the Church of Scotland, agreed upon A Confession of Faith, A Form of Presbyterial Church-government, A Directory for the Public Worship of God, with the Larger and
Shorter

ters of doubtful disputation, we must look on it as one of the very worst signs of our times, that any should do so.

2dly, We shall offer an explication of some passages of the *acknowledgment of sins* prefixed to the *Bond* for renewing our Solemn Covenants.

[N. B. *What follows upon this head, was not delivered in public.*]

We do not propose an explication of the whole of it,—but only of those passages in which there may be some difficulty to ordinary readers.—It may not perhaps be unnecessary in the entry, to warn people against considering the things herein treated of, as matters of mere speculation in which they have no concern. An indifferency of this sort is the prevailing plague of the generation; nay, and is extremely ready to steal in upon the minds even

Shorter Catechisms. And these were severally received by the Church of Scotland, as the parts of the covenanted uniformity in religion,—in the manner expressed in the Acts of the General Assembly respectively prefixed to them. These therefore are what we understand by a covenanted reformation.

Now, these contain in themselves a proof of their agreeableness to the word of God. The several evils condescended upon in the *acknowledgment of sins*—prefixed to the *Bond*, are manifest deviations from these our standards; and therefore are manifestly contrary to the word of God.—To ask proof from the Scriptures—of the *fact* of the things condescended upon in the *acknowledgment of sins*, is even ridiculous; that is a matter that depends entirely upon the testimony of witnesses. But a joining in such an acknowledgment is not therefore to be thought absurd; because we are required by the word of God, to give credit to the testimony of credible witnesses, 2 Cor. xiii. 1. Nor can it be alledged to be such, but at the rate of denying all obligation to acknowledge the sins of our fathers; while these cannot be known unto us but by testimony. Perhaps, the *evil* of some of the things condescended upon in the *acknowledgment of sins*—may not be capable of immediate and direct proof from the scriptures. But while the covenanted reformation stands authorised by the word of God; all defections therefrom must stand condemned by it: And it requires only a diligent attention unto a covenanted reformation and the evils narrated in the *acknowledgment of sins*, to see the latter to be undoubted and grievous deviations from the former. And thus the *acknowledgment of sins* comes forth proved from *the law and the testimony*, as much as any thing of that sort is capable of.—While people therefore are called upon to join in the *Bond*,—they are called upon to no more but a steadfast adherence to a covenanted reformation, in opposition to prevailing defections from it in the present times; and while they are called upon to this, they are called to no more but a steadfast adherence to the Holy Scriptures.

Thus we join heartily with Mr *Scot* in his exhortation to Seceders, to bring their principles to the bar of *the law and the testimony*; and to admit of nothing but what is agreeable thereunto: as being fully satisfied, that the more narrowly and impartially they examine them by that unerring rule,—they will both love their own peculiar testimony, and detest his peculiar scheme he more.

even of professed witnesses. Yet there is no right thinking of them, but as the articles of that *indictment* which the Lord has against those lands; which he has been pleading against them,—and which he will plead, unless they are found returning unto him by repentance and reformation.

The *acknowledgment of sins* begins, where the present defection began.—The year 1649 was remarkable for reformation in both church and State : Particularly, the Solemn League and Covenant was renewed, with a solemn acknowledgment of sins and engagement unto duties. Accordingly, *the acknowledgment of sins*, we say, doth not go any further back than the defection which obtained after that period.—However, this is not to be understood, as if we thought there was nothing defective or culpable in the foregoing state of matters. For the *Associate Presbytery* in the *Act, Declaration and Testimony*, after bearing witness to the reformation attained to between the years 1638 and 1649, express themselves thus; “ It is not hereby intended to affirm, That under the above-mentioned period, there was nothing defective or wanting as to the beauty and order of the house of God, or that there was nothing culpable in the administration †.”—

Only,

† Perhaps, the Parliament of *Scotland* carried the matter a great deal too far, in enforcing our Solemn Covenants with civil pains and punishments : Though, according to what I formerly observed in a note at the foot of the page, near the close of the first sermon on covenanting, the peculiarity of their circumstances might make some things excusable in them which would be altogether intollerable in an ordinary state of matters.—However, nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that because the *Associate Presbytery* adopted the reformation carried on in that period, they therefore adopted every one of the measures thereof. As to the affair of the Parliament’s enforcing the covenants with civil pains,—Mr *Wilson* (who appears from the stile of the *judicial testimony* to have been the original framer of it, and who may therefore be supposed to have had a thorough understanding of its meaning) leaves us in no dubiety; “ When the covenant was enjoined under all civil pains, it appears to me, *says he*, that no more was intended than that the refusers of the covenant should not be admitted unto places of public trust; and this I humbly judge may be very well justified.—But if our author (Mr *Currie*) shall make it evident unto me, that the civil punishment for a simple refusing of the covenant was carried any higher than as I have mentioned, I shall yield unto him that the Parliament 1640,” (which required the National Covenant to be sworn under all civil pains) “ were wrong; neither shall I justify the supplication of the Assembly 1639,” (craving them to do so.) *Defence*, p. 299.

One thing is certain, that the *testimony* takes no notice, and consequently gives no approbation, of the Parliament’s enforcing the covenants with civil pains and punishments.—And as to the *act of classes*, and the *act for keeping the judicatories and places of trust free of corruption*,—which the *testimony* takes notice of with approbation; they relate intirely to the exclusion of malignants and prophane persons from places of power and trust,—which, with Mr *Wilson*, I judge may be very well justified.

Mr Scot,

Only, as both church and state were in a course of progressive reformation, preceding the year 1650; and as they have been, for most part, in a course of progressive deformation ever since that time,—without ever returning to the reformation then attained to: the present *acknowledgment of sins* is properly begun, when the reformation stopt and the defection began.

Accordingly, the first thing particularly condescended upon, as matter of humiliation, is the admission of malignants into places of power and trust,—in consequence of what were called the *public resolutions*: “ Though the sinfulness of receiving into
 “ our bosom, and admitting into places of power and
 “ trust, such as were opposers of and enemies to a co-
 “ venanted work of reformation, was solemnly acknow-
 “ ledged in the year 1649, and reformation in this
 “ particular was sworn unto; yet in a short time there-
 “ after, in consequence of the *public resolutions*, places
 “ of power and trust were filled with such; and they
 “ were

Mr Scot, in almost every page both of his *account* and of his *peculiar scheme*, will have it, reason or none, That the enforcement of a covenanted reformation by civil pains and punishments—is an essential part of the secession-testimony. But it is so far from being an essential part of it, that it is no part of it at all. We have just now seen, that the original framer of the judicial act and testimony disclaims the civil pains with which our covenants were enforced,—any further than as they imported an exclusion of the enemies of a covenanted reformation from places of power and trust, that is from the capacity of overturning a covenanted reformation. And I do not know, if there is one member of the Associate Synod, or of the whole secession body, of a different judgment. One thing is certain, that there is not a syllable in the Judicial Testimony, or in any act or deed omitted by the Associate Presbytery or Synod,—which can, but by the wildest stretch, be alledged to carry the matter farther than as just now represented.—All the above gentleman's outcry therefore, as if the Synod's principles on this head were inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's kingdom,—is absolutely groundless. For the civil magistrate to oblige every body to swear the covenants, and become members of the church,—though ever so much against their consciences, and though ever so unfit for making such a solemn profession; would indeed be manifestly inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's kingdom. But to suppose this, or any thing of a like import, to be the principle of Seceders,—is grossly to injure them. However, to alledge that because our ancestors endeavoured to take effectual measures for the security of their spiritual interests, by the incapacitating of their adversaries for depriving them of them; or to suppose that because Seceders justify them herein: To imagine that either of these is inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, is even as ridiculous as to fancy spirituality to be inconsistent with itself.

“ were suddenly received into full church-communion
 “ and fellowship.” For the right understanding of this, it
 is necessary to observe,

1. That we are far from supposing, that *dominion is founded in grace*; or that a due measure of scripture-qualifications is absolutely necessary to the being of the magistral office. The office of the civil magistrate is purely civil; and therefore civil qualifications only can be absolutely necessary to the being and discharge of his office *as such*.—And this was the judgment of the opposers, as well as of the abettors, of the *public resolutions*. This is evident from their approbation of the *Confession, Chap. xxiii. Sect. 4.* And the famous Mr *Rutherford*, a zealous *Anti-resolutioner*,—delivers himself as plainly as one could wish upon this head. “ Our divines say, and that with good warrant, that the kingly power, as kingly, is one and the same in kind, in heathen *Nero*, “ and in christian *Constantine*.—Neither doth Christianity super- “ add and give of new, any kingly power to a king; because he “ is now become, of God’s grace, of a Heathen king, a Christian “ king. Christianity added indeed a new obligation, to employ “ his kingly power, which he had full and entire before.—But “ the same king, while he was a heathen king, had the same king- “ ly power and authority to perform these regal acts.” *Peaceable Plea*, p. 296.

2. That it is the indispensable duty of a people professing the true religion, to provide and bring to pass, that their magistrates, supreme and subordinate, shall give security for the maintenance of the said true religion; and that they shall rule them by laws no way prejudicial, but subservient thereunto. This is their duty, as ever they would value their religion. No wise man would set a wolf to guard his sheep. And no wise state, professing the truth, will set an enemy to the truth, to guard the free exercise of their religion against those that would deprive them of it.

In agreeableness to this principle, the kingdom of *Scotland* attained to a considerable pitch of reformation. The deed of civil constitution was set upon this footing by *Act viii. Parl. 1. Ja. VI.* In as much as it provided, that the king should be of the same profession of religion with his protestant subjects, swear to steadfastness therein, and to rule them accordingly. It was further reformed, according to the further degrees of reformation they came afterwards to attain unto,—by *Act xv. of the 2d Session of Parliament 1649.*

Various laws were also made between 1638 and 1650,---excluding from places of power and trust, all who were disaffected

ted to the then work of reformation, and abettors of the arbitrary government which the king then aimed at. Particularly, by *Act* viii of the said Session of Parliament 1649, the persons just now mentioned were divided into various classes according to the demerit of their offences, and debarred accordingly.---And it is to be observed, that the noblemen and gentlemen excluded by this act, were such as wanted to get into power, for the sake of overturning the present establishment in church and state, and of bringing things back to the same situation in which they were before the year 1637†. Of this they had given pregnant evidence already; and they gave melancholly proof of it afterwards,—when, on the king's restoration, they actually overturned the present establishment, and carried on a course of most grievous persecution, till God mercifully delivered us out of their hands at the revolution. In a word, they were exactly of the same spirit and temper with our present *Jacobites* and *High-flyers*. So that the Parliament

† Hereby appears how injurious it is, to blame our ancestors as *setting the peculiar privileges of the church, and the offices and preferments of the state, upon the self-same term and condition, viz. a swearing of the Covenants.*—And where was the impropriety of providing in a time of general reformation, that none should have preferments in the State, who were disaffected to proper terms of communion with the church? A swearing of the Covenants, in order to the enjoyment of church-privileges, was considered as a matter of homage to God; but the same thing in order to the enjoyment of civil offices, was considered as a matter of security to the State; and therefore as properly a civil qualification, of persons fit for being entrusted with the conservation of their natural rights. And how could this be any disparagement of church-privileges, or any undue restriction of State-preferments; that none should be trusted with offices in the State, where a reformed church subsisted, and by the members of that church,—but those who gave evidence of fitness for such a trust in the State, respecting the concerns of that church, as being disposed for paying due homage to God in the church?—To be governed not arbitrarily, but according to law; to enjoy the freedom of their consciences in the profession of a covenanted reformation, in safety from those who would have deprived them of that liberty, and imposed prelacy with its concomitant corruptions and superstitions upon them: These were valuable privileges which belonged to them as men, endued with reason and conscience. And when they enacted, That those only should be admitted to places of power and trust,—who had given evidence of their fidelity in reference to the protection of their just rights, against the encroachments of arbitrary power and impositions on conscience; they did nothing but what common sense and discretion must have dictated to them; and the admitting of persons to the *offices and preferments of the State*, was upon the footing of being qualified accordingly.—In a word, it was the giving a practical proof of fidelity, in reference to the maintenance of their privileges against violent encroachments, that was insisted upon as the condition of admission thereunto: while indeed a refusing to swear the covenants was justly constructed of as an evidence of a disposition, rather for betraying these privileges into the hands of the enemy, than for maintaining them; and the refusers were debarred accordingly.

ment were obliged, from a principle of self-preservation, to exclude them.

Upon the whole, it is to be observed, that our witnessing forefathers acted no other part in all this matter, than every other people do, when it is in the power of their hand. There are no people in the world, I suppose, who would not wish to have magistrates of their own profession, such as would give countenance and encouragement thereunto; far less are there any, who would not wish to have magistrates disposed and obliged to protect and defend them in their civil rights and privileges;---and having obtained this, who would not endeavour to exclude those who wanted to deprive them of their civil as well as religious liberties, from the power and capacity of doing them such a mischief. And our ancestors did nothing more.

3. That there is no manner of inconsistency between the two above-mentioned principles. Civil qualifications alone are necessary to the *being* of magistracy, according to the civil nature thereof. A due measure of scripture-qualifications is requisite to the well-being of it,—or to the exercise of it to the advantage and comfort of the church. A *Deist* might perform all the duties belonging to one, purely as a civil magistrate. But it would require a good measure of religious qualifications in one, to perform them so as might be for the support and encouragement of his Christian subjects in the exercise of their religion. Even as a master, of no religious principles or practice, might perform all the duties incumbent on him, purely as a master; though it would require a good measure of religious zeal and prudence, to manage his business in such a manner as to countenance and encourage his servants in the practice of religious duties. A *Deist* therefore, who can perform the duties of his political station, may be warrantably submitted unto; “ Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate’s just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him.” But a people professing the truth would act a very foolish part, if they entrusted the guardianship of their religious liberties to such a one; nay, they would act inconsistently with their duty and interest, if they did not use their utmost endeavour to have such magistrates set over them, as might not only protect but encourage them in their religious capacity. And this was all that our ancestors aimed at.

4. That no man may be justly deprived of any thing that he has a natural right to, for non-conformity to the religion of his country. It is a grievous persecution, to denude a man of life, or property, or liberty, for his non-compliance with the best establishment

blishment that ever was or can be in the world,—while he behaves himself otherwise as a good subject of the civil State. If he transgresses the laws of the State, or gives civil disturbance to the church †,—let him bear his own punishment. But it is a ruining

† Hereby I understand, the offering of disturbance to her assemblies or judicatories; with a contriving and plotting to deprive her of the free enjoyment of her privileges.—And here I cannot but take notice of a grievous misconstruction of the *Solemn League*, as if it imported an obligation to persecution for conscience-sake. Mr *Scot of Dundee*, in his *Account*, p. 42, after repeating the question in the *Formula* respecting the perpetual obligation of our *Solemn Covenants*,—adds, “ I could not be clear to sign an affirmative “ answer to said question; beside other reasons, for this,—that my conscience “ was much pinched about the lawfulness of that part of the *Solemn League* “ which binds the leaguers to deliver up unto the civil powers all those who “ might be deemed hinderers of any part of the reformation, or national uni- “ formity therein covenanted,—to be by them punished civilly, that is, in “ their persons or estates.” It is the fourth article of the *Solemn League*, which he must have his eye to here, viz. “ We shall also, with all faithful- “ ness, endeavour the discovery of all such as have been, or shall be incen- “ daries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of “ religion, dividing the king from his people, or one of the kingdoms from “ another, or making any faction, or parties amongst the people, contrary to “ this League and Covenant; that they may be brought to public trial, and “ receive condign punishment, as the degree of their offences shall require or “ deserve; or the supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or “ others having power from them for that effect, shall judge convenient.”

I endeavoured to obviate this objection before it was made by the above-mentioned gentleman, near the beginning of the *third sermon on covenanting*. To which I shall add here,—that good subjects, though differing in their judgment and practice from the reformation then carrying on,—provided they used no sort of endeavours for undermining said reformation, and getting prelacy with its concomitant corruptions now cast out—obtruded on these lands again; that these, I say, were to be brought to civil punishment, as is insinuated above, and elsewhere by the forefaid writer,—is utterly refused to be sworn unto in the *Solemn League*. But the persons whom the just now mentioned article of it respected,—were manifestly those who, not satisfying themselves with living soberly and peaceably, endeavoured, in an underhand and crafty manner, to overturn the reformation; to get prelacy, with the other corruptions of the *English* church, imposed, under heavy penalties, upon the consciences of their fellow-subjects;—and who at the same time struggled hard to have arbitrary government imposed upon these lands,—hereby dividing the King from his people, and one of the kingdoms from another. This, whatever religion might be, or be pretended to be, in the matter,—was an high misdemeanor against society, and an attempt to infringe the natural and religious liberties of mankind; and therefore as such deserved to be condignly punished by the civil magistrate.

I cannot but also observe here, a grievous misconstruction of the question in the *Formula*, respecting presbyterial church government,—by the forefaid author, in the place quoted above. Because three degrees of subordination, viz. of kirk sessions to presbyteries, of presbyteries to provincial synods, and

sming of the church, instead of preserving her,—to oblige him to become a professed member of the ecclesiastical body, under the pain of the loss of his privileges as a good subject of the civil State. It is plain, as property is not founded in grace; no more can a man be bereaved of it for the want of grace.—But it will not therefore follow, that a man may not be refused a place of power and trust, till he has given proper evidence and proof of his fitness for being entrusted with it. The reason is obvious: the protection of his natural privileges is what he is entitled to, as a good subject; a place in the government is what he has no claim to, but at the discretion of the society of which he is a member. No man was ever born to rule over his fellow-creatures.—Thus, it is true, the malignants were refused places of power and trust; they were judged unfit to be entrusted with the defence of those privileges which it was known they wanted to undermine: but hereby no injury was done to them; no infringement made upon their natural privileges,—life, liberty, or property.

5. As is hinted in the above-mentioned article of the *acknowledgment of sins*, our ancestors having acknowledged their former failures in the affair of filling places of power and trust; they solemnly engaged, to “endeavour, according to their places and callings, that judicatories and all places of power and trust both in kirk and State may consist of, and be filled with, such men as are of known good affection to the cause of God, and of a blameless and Christian conversation.” And when they did so, they did no more than engage to take proper measures for the conservation of their privileges. So it had been good for them, if they had stuck to their principles. But

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of provincial synods to General Assemblies, are condescended on in the said question as warranted by divine authority; Mr *Scot* will have it, that an affirmative answer to said question amounts to an acknowledgment of them all as essential to the being of a Presbyterian church,—and consequently that because we have not different Synods in subordination to one General Assembly, we therefore want what we believe and acknowledge to be essential to Presbytery. But a reading of the question once more over, will be enough to convince him or any body of the mistake. The question is, “Are you persuaded,—that Presbyterian church government,—in the due subordination of [judicatories, such as of] kirk-sessions to Presbyteries, of Presbyteries to provincial Synods, and of provincial Synods to General Assemblies,—is the only form of government laid down and appointed by the Lord Christ in his word, &c.?” Subordination is essential to Presbytery, as contradistinguished to independency. But the degrees thereof may be fewer or more, as may consist with the circumstances and edification of the church. And I am certainly informed that the words of the above question which I have inclosed within the crotchets, were inserted of purpose to give this view of the matter. And indeed it is easy to observe, that they must have been so,

6. It was not long till their steadfastness came to be tried. After the death of *Charles I.* his son *Charles II.* being proclaimed King by the *Scots*; on his coming home, those who had been excluded from places of power and trust, flocked about him,—and insinuated what hardships were put upon him and them by their exclusion, and how willing they would be to serve him, if they could only be admitted. The temper and principles of those gentlemen being abundantly more agreeable to the young king, than those of the staunch Presbyterians,—he presently falls upon measures for getting them admitted accordingly. And the present critical situation of his affairs is made use of as an argument for admitting them into the army at least. But knowing he could not so readily accomplish his purpose, unless he got the church to yield to it, or at least to be silent; he orders the commission of the General Assembly to meet, and return him an answer to the following question.

“ What persons are to be admitted to rise in arms, and to join with the forces of the kingdom, and in what capacity; for defence thereof, against the armies of the *Sectaries*, who, contrary to the *Solemn League and Covenant* and treaties, have most unjustly invaded and are destroying the kingdom?” A sly way of asking, if they would give way to the admission of malignants.

The Commission, December 14, 1650, answered, “ In this case of so great and evident necessity, we cannot be against raising all fencible persons in the land, and permitting them to fight against this enemy, for the defence of the kingdom; excepting such as are *excommunicated*, *forfeited*, notoriously profane or flagitious; or such as have been from the beginning, or continue still, and are at this time obstinate and professed enemies and opposers of the *Covenant* and *cause of God*. And for the capacity of acting, that the Estates of Parliament ought to have, as we hope they will have, special care; that, in this so general a concurrence of all the people of the kingdom, none be put in such trust and power, as may be prejudicial to the cause of God: and that such officers as are of known integrity and affection to the cause, and particularly such as have suffered in our former armies, may be taken special notice of.”

Thus the Commission, not discerning the snare laid for them, instead of standing upon their former bottom, gave way to the breaking down of the old fences about our religion and liberties. These resolutions were faithfully testified against by a great number of the honestest of the ministry, who on that account were called *Protesters*. However, in consequence of them, the army was presently filled with such whose disaffection to the work of reformation

formation since the year 1638, was abundantly notour; and thus with the consent of the church, the sword was put into the hands of her avowed enemies.

And yet even this did not satisfy them; but they must needs be admitted into the judicatories also. Accordingly, next year, the King and Estates of Parliament proposed to the *Commission*, "Whether or not it be unlawful, — to admit such to be members of the *Committee of Estates*, who are now debarred from the public trust; they being such as have satisfied the kirk for the offence for which they were excluded, and are since admitted to enter into covenant † with us?" And afterwards they pressed the *Commission* to declare, "If it be sinful to repeal the *Act of Classes*?" And the *Commission*, by their answer, gave way to it. Whereupon, as Mr Wodrow in the *introduction* to his history, p. 5. tells us, "The Parliament rescinded the act of classes in all its articles; by which great members formerly excluded were brought into Parliament, and nominate as members of the *Committee of Estates*, and made capable of places of trust. And in a little time the malignant party, at least the bulk of them, were admitted to the chief places of trust, and got the management of all into their hand."---And thus our religion and liberties were surrendered up into the hands of the avowed enemies of both. And had it not been for the growing power of the *English* army, they had soon undermined both.

However, even in the mean time, these public resolutions were productive of melancholly fruits. They were the cause of a melancholly rent in the church. The *Assembly* justified the *Commission*, and censured several of their protesting brethren. And yet it is plain, they were contending for nothing but the rights and privi-

† A satisfying of the kirk, or a taking of the Covenant, could be no security to Church or State; while it was visible they were willing to comply with any such measures; provided they could hereby gain their own political ends, — and for these ends only. (Bishop Burnet, in his history, calls it a *mock penitence*, which was indeed a matter of great scandal.—) It was indeed visible, that any fair conditions proposed by the *Commission*, in their answer to the first question, were to be made no proper account of; or further than in order to catch at the general conclusion; — and that any fair conditions proposed in this *second question* were only designed as a specious pretence; all which the event soon put beyond all doubt. And thus the *Commission* suffered themselves at best inadvertently, to be caught in a snare, — which their protesting brethren saw and pointed out from the beginning. After all, it is not the *public resolutions* abstractly considered, but what was quickly done in consequence of them, (and evidently designed to be so,) — that is directly set forth as a public evil, in the *acknowledgment of sins*.

privileges of the church and kingdom. Nay, and dear bought experience convinced them all of this, as soon as the malignants had the power of accomplishing their designs.---And the rent now made was one principal reason why no *judicial* and *joint testimony* was lifted up against the overthrow of the work of reformation, at the king's restoration in the year 1660. Being thus disjointed, they were not in a good capacity for uniting together in a joint testimony. At the same time that the *Protesters* were borne down by their brethren the *public Resolutioners*, who, many of them, were thirsting for a change; they were restrained by those in power. And many of the *honest* resolutioners were cajoled into a sinful silence; partly by the intrigues of the court, and partly by the treachery of their *dishonest* brethren. --- Thus here is a principal spring of all the defection that has followed, in both Church and State.

Accordingly, the next thing in the *acknowledgment of sins* is;
 “ And our backslidings did increase from time to
 “ time, till that general apostasy and defection;
 “ when *Charles II.* being restored to the govern-
 “ ment, all the legal securities given to a covenant-
 “ ed reformation betwixt the years 1638 and 1650
 “ were pulled down: all the several Parliaments
 “ that met during this period, together with all
 “ their acts and proceedings in favours of reforma-
 “ tion, were declared null and void.”---This was
 done by two different acts of Parliament, 1661. By their *9th*
 act, they annulled the parliaments and committees kept after the
 year 1648. By their *15th* act, they annulled all the Parliaments
 that had been held betwixt the years 1640 and 1648: Not on-
 ly some acts of those Parliaments, but the Parliaments themselves
 were hereby nullified and made void. These were the Parlia-
 ments which had made a noble stand for religion and liberty, had
 revived Presbyterian church government---avouching it as of di-
 vine authority, had sworn and enjoined our Solemn Covenants,
 and pursued the noble ends thereof; and must therefore be now
 condemned and razed, in order to the erection of absurd prelacy
 and arbitrary government.---Besides the unheard-of iniquity of
 those acts, in overturning a covenanted reformation; such a pro-
 cedure was a most pernicious precedent, as shaking all possible se-
 curity for the future: No government can be so firmly establish-
 ed as not to be liable to a revolution; and therefore if a number
 of Parliaments can be nullified by wholesale, no body can ever
 be

be safe.—These were the *Acts Reciflory*, especially the laſt, which we ſhall afterwards ſhew were not reſcinded at the revolution.

“ In like manner, the Preſbyterial order and government of the houſe of God, to the maintenance and preſervation of which the whole land was ſolemnly ſworn, was overthrown.”—Having paſſed the foreſaid reciflory acts, hereby overthrowing the legal ſecurities of the church; by their 16th act this ſame year, they leave it to the King to ſettle the government of the church, as he finds moſt conſiſtent with the Scripture, monarchy and peace: and in the mean time, Synods, Preſbyteries and Sefſions, are allowed to ſit, providing they keep themſelves within bounds.—However, they are ſoon violently abridged in their liberty, and interrupted. And after the erection of Prelacy this ſame year, they are abſolutely diſcharged,---without ſubjecting themſelves to the Prelates obtruded upon them. And thus the overthrow of Preſbytery is completed by the very ſame perſons, who, with hands liſted up to the Moſt High God, had ſworn to preſerve and maintain it.

“ And Prelacy, which had been abjured by our Covenants, was ſet up in its place.”—The Parliament having by the foreſaid act left it to the King to ſettle the government of the church as he pleaſed; he by his letter to the Privy Council in Auguſt this ſame year 1661, erected Prelacy accordingly. So that Prelacy was obtruded on the church of Scotland, without the conſent of any one of her judicatories, intirely in virtue of the Royal Supremacy. Nay, and the Parliament, which by their firſt act next year made it the legal eſtabliſhment, proceed upon the ſame footing; while they give this as the reaſon of their eſtabliſhing it, That *the ordering and diſpoſal of the external government and policy of the church doth properly belong unto his Maſteſty, as an inherent right of the crown, by virtue of his royal prerogative and ſupremacy in cauſes eccleſiaſtical*: It ſo pleaſed the King, and therefore it ſo pleaſed them. An eſtabliſhment exactly ſuited to the arbitrary nature of Prelatical government.

“ And likewise, that famous aſſembly which met at *Glaſgow* in the year 1638, was declared by the Parliament to be an unlawful and ſeditious meeting; and all that was done between the ſaid year and the year 1651, in proſecution of a
“ cove-

“ covenanted reformation, was declared rebellious
 “ and treasonable; and the *National Covenant*, as
 “ sworn in the year 1638, together with the *Solemn League and Covenant*, were declared to
 “ be unlawful oaths, and not binding on the lands.”

—This was done by the 2^d act of the 2^d Session of Parliament 1662. The Assembly which is hereby condemned as an unlawful and seditious meeting, was that which revived the reformation after a grievous defection for about forty years preceding; abolished abjured Prelacy, deposed all the bishops from their pretended episcopal function, and excommunicated several of them; established Presbytery, according to the antient Scripture platform thereof; and laid the foundation for all the subsequent glorious work of reformation;—and therefore could not but be the great eye-sore of the Bishops and present managers.---While they pretended to annul the binding obligation of our Solemn Covenants, they hereby assumed a power of dispensing with oaths,---a power which is disclaimed by all Protestants, and claimed only by Papists. And what makes this the more dreadful is, that the very persons who did so, had sworn those Covenants. The King, the King's Commissioner (the Earl of Middleron), had solemnly sworn them; nay, the generality of the members of Parliament must have sworn them,---as they were renewed through the whole land no farther back than the year 1649.

“ Yea, as if all this had not been enough, such
 “ was the height of wickedness, that they were ignominiously burnt in some considerable places of
 “ the nation.”—The *Solemn League and Covenant* was, by order of both Houses of Parliament, burnt at London, May 22^d, 1661. What Mr *Wodrow* relates in his history (Vol. I. p. 221.) deserves our observation. “ I find it taken notice of, *says he*, in
 “ several papers written at this time, (viz. in the year 1665),
 “ that the appearance of a globe of fire was seen above that part
 “ of the city where the Solemn League and Covenant was burnt
 “ so ignominiously by the hand of the hangman. Whatever was in
 “ this, it seems certain that the plague broke out there; and it
 “ was observed to rage mostly in that street, where that open affront had been put upon the oath God, and very few were
 “ left alive there.”—They were burnt at *Linlithgow*, with peculiar marks of ignominy,—on the 29th of May 1662; the day of the King's birth and restoration, and now appointed to be observed as an anniversary holy day.—By authority of the Privy Council,

Council, 1682, the *Solemn League and Covenant* was burnt at *Edinburgh* by the hand of the hangman. But it was taken particular notice of, that the Bailie of *Edinburgh*, who attended on that occasion, and gave the Covenant into the hand of the executioner, had all his houses in the *Parliament-cloze* soon afterwards reduced to ashes. And though all pains were taken to suppress the flames, yet they baffled every attempt till those houses were consumed, and then subsided of their own accord. And his posterity were reduced so low, as to become the objects of public charity,

It is added, “ As also, most sinful and wicked invasions were made upon the headship and sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his Church, by several Parliamentary acts and deeds asserting the *King's Supremacy* in all causes whatsoever; and declaring that the ordering and disposal of the external government and policy of the church doth properly belong unto the King, as an inherent right of the crown.”— One of these acts was taken notice of just now, viz. the 1st act of the 2d Session of the Restoration-Parliament; and the chief of them will fall in afterwards.

And indeed the *King's supremacy* was the great *Sibboleth* of those mournful times: These who owned it, met with favour; those who disowned it, were exposed to unheard-of barbarities.—It was readily acknowledged by these sufferers, in contradiction to the wicked usurpations of Antichrist,—That all ecclesiastical persons are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, in all things of a secular nature, as much as any other persons within his dominions. But a supremacy in causes ecclesiastical cannot be ascribed to any person or power upon earth, without indignity to the One Master and Lawgiver, Christ Jesus. He alone is Lord of the conscience; to him alone it belongs to give laws and ordinances to his church.—Even ecclesiastical persons whose proper province it is to judge and determine in ecclesiastical matters, have no power or authority to enact laws or rules beside or contrary to the laws and ordinances of Christ; the utmost extent of their power and authority is to explain and apply to particular cases, the laws and rules which Christ has delivered unto them in his word.

Further, as the supremacy with which the Parliament had complimented the King, was infinitely derogatory to the prerogative

gative of Christ; so it was also manifestly inconsistent with the ministerial authority just now mentioned, with which Christ has clothed the office-bearers of his church. It leaves them no power or authority which is not dependent upon and subordinate unto the civil magistrate. And thus the Church is made a mere creature of the State.—And so it struck at once at all church-power in heaven and in earth, lodging it all in the King.

The foundation of the great apostasy being thus laid deep and sure,—it is in the next place acknowledged, that “ When
 “ *Prelacy* was thus reared up, as the most part of
 “ the ministry made a sinful and shameful defection
 “ unto it; so the bulk and body of the land, in
 “ contradiction to our Solemn Oaths and Cove-
 “ nants, did submit unto the same.”—Of about nine hundred ministers in the church of *Scotland*, between three and four hundred were ejected for non-conformity to *Prelacy*; the rest conformed and kept their churches. And though numbers, especially in the West and South, would never join with the Bishops and their underlings; yet the bulk and body of the nation conformed in greater or lesser measure.

However, the bent of the people's inclinations, through the far greatest part of the land, was to *Presbytery*; and continued to be so through the whole dismal period of *Prelacy's* domination. This was owing to the diligence of *Presbyterian* ministers before the restoration, in instructing their people in the principles of a Covenanted Reformation. Bishop *Burnet*, in the history of his own times, (Vol. I. p. 226.) *owns they had a comprehension of matters of religion, greater than he had seen among people of that sort any where.* And the preaching of faithful ministers, in the face of death or crueller usage, with the triumph and death of those who died *martyrs* for the truth,—continued to *rivet* deep impressions of the divine right of *Presbytery* in their minds. Besides, their aversion to *Prelacy* was not a little helped by the scandalous practice and persecuting temper of the Prelates and Curates.—Yet it is a certain fact, that there was a general, though by many a very reluctant, submission given to *Prelacy*. Many conformed more from fear of, than love to, the established clergy. But though this will not justify such, it shews the malignant influence of persecution for conscience-sake,—as serving only to make people hypocrites.

“ Likewise, in this day of apostasy and defecti-
 “ on, such of the ministry as complied not with
Prelacy,

“ *Prelacy*, did, upon the Privy Council’s proclamation, desert their *Synodical* and *Presbyterial* meetings; whence no *judicial testimony* was lifted up against the course of defection.”—

Some faint attempts were made in a few Synods in the spring of the year 1661, viz. of *Glasgow and Air, Fife, Dumfries, and Galloway*,---but nothing accomplished. The honest party were borne down by the wiles and intrigues of false brethren, who were ripe for a change, and thirsting after Bishopricks. And those Synods which the court-party suspected would be true to their principles, were narrowly watched by noblemen or gentlemen appointed for the purpose; and upon a motion being made for a testimony or supplication to the Parliament in behalf of Presbytery, they were discharged to proceed and ordered to dismiss by those court inspectors. And all of them obeyed, without finishing any thing. One way or other, all *joint* and *judicial testimony* was neglected; and an opportunity for it in a great measure lost.

For against the ordinary time of the next meeting of Synods, the King by his letter to the Privy Council of August 14th this same year, had erected *Prelacy*, and inhibited the meeting of Synods; and, by his letter of December 28th, *all ecclesiastical meetings in Synods, Presbyteries and Sessions, until they should be ordered by the Bishops, are discharged*. And hereupon *Presbyteries*, as well as Synods, were, on the Privy Council’s proclamation, conformable to the King’s letter, deserted also; without any proper testimony against this sacrilegious encroachment. As Mr *Wodrow* in his history (Vol. I. p. 112.) says, “ Ministers and honest people had their thoughts perhaps as much spent in the melancholly forecastings of approaching sufferings, as upon due methods of a joint opposition to the encroachments so fast making upon them. Too little of a spirit for this appeared, either with ministers or people. In some places they met, but did nothing. And piece by piece all the Presbyteries of the church were deserted, save some who subjected themselves to the Prelates.” ---From this time forward, the testimony was maintained and carried on by faithful ministers in their sermons and writings,---and by sufferings.

Whatever may be said for them, in respect of the outward force put upon them; their deserting their Synodical and Presbyterial meetings so readily, was far from following the noble example of the Assembly at *Glasgow* 1638. They sat and finished their business, even after the King’s Commissioner had required them by open proclamation from the Cross to rise and dismiss upon pain

of rebellion; though their business was every whit as difficult and hazzardous, as that which the Synods in Scotland were now called unto.---Besides, if their bearing proper testimony to a covenanted reformation should have exposed them to sufferings; they might have reckoned it their honour to have suffered along with those brethren who were about this very time drinking deep of that cup,---as Messrs *James Guthrie, Robert Trail* and others,---having been cast into prison for meeting privately in *Edinburgh*, in order to draw up an address to the King in a suitableness to the present exigencies.

“ Yea, the most part of them left their own
 “ flocks; which hereby became a prey to the
 “ grievous wolves that were afterwards thrust in
 “ upon them.”—By act of the Privy Council, at Glasgow, October 1. 1662,---all those ministers who had been ordained to the ministry since the year 1649 (at which time patronages were abolished) and who had not accepted of presentations from their patrons and collation from the bishop of the diocese, and who had not observed the 29th of May as a holy day,---are prohibited and discharged to exercise any part of the ministry at their respective churches; are banished from their parishes, nay, and even the bounds of the Presbyteries where they had served; their churches are declared vacant, and people are discharged to hear them, or heritors to pay them their stipends;---and they are charged to remove accordingly---against the 1st of November. About 300 ministers fell under this act; and the most part of them forsook their flocks accordingly.---They did well in not submitting to accept of presentations, and collation from the Bishop; by which they would have renounced their principles and ordination-vows. But they discovered much fainting and timidity, in giving so tame submission to this sacrilegious act, while no outward force was put upon them. And it is observable, that those who submitted fared no better than the few who kept their churches till they were forcibly cast out of them.

Thus all sorts of persons were, in greater or lesser measure, involved in this great apostasy. Our Solemn Covenants had been no fewer than six times sworn by the generality throughout all Scotland. Nay, they had been sworn once or oftner by the very persons now involved in all this defection. No nation was ever more solemnly bound to God; and yet no nation ever made a more sudden or awful apostasy. So that the land, as such, stands chargeable with the most aggravated covenant-violation.---And this is an iniquity that testifies against us to this very day; while
 the

the generality have been so far from being of a disposition to return to the Lord, that a covenanted reformation is even a matter of common odium and nuisance with them. This is enough to strike all that have any feeling of the Lord's controversy, with terror and amazement. *Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit.* Jer. ii. 9, 10, 11.

A Covenanted Reformation being razed to the foundation, and abjured Prelacy set up in its place; various methods were fallen upon to get all to bow to this melancholly establishment. A multiplicity of oaths for the maintenance thereof are imposed, and all who refused to swallow them, are exposed to intolerable severities. The hainous evil of which is acknowledged in the next paragraph.

“ Moreover, during this period of hainous back-
 “ sliding, many sinful *oaths, declarations* and *bonds*
 “ were imposed; and among others, the oath of
 “ *allegiance*, or rather *supremacy*, with the in-
 “ *strument assertory* of the Royal Prerogative;
 “ the *declaration*, and that self contradictory oath
 “ the *Test*: By which oaths and bonds, the usurp-
 “ ed supremacy over the house of God was ac-
 “ knowledged and recognized, and a covenanted
 “ reformation was renounced and abjured.”

Thus the oath of *allegiance* in reality carried in it the oath of *supremacy* also; as therein (beside an oath of civil allegiance) the swearer testified and declared, by his solemn oath, that he acknowledged the King to be the *only Supreme Governor of this kingdom over all persons and in all causes*,---and swore to maintain his Majesty's jurisdiction foresaid, against all deadly. This blending of the oath of allegiance and the oath of supremacy together, was a stratagem of the court; to get all those condemned as rebels to the government, who scrupled to acknowledge the King to be Head of the Church.

The King's supremacy was still more explicitly recognized in the *instrument assertory of the Royal Prerogative*, which all in public trust were required to subscribe; nay, which was imposed upon all that were suspected to favour a covenanted reformation: while therein (beside several things of a civil nature, destructive of the liberty of the subjects) the subscriber was required to acknow-
 ledge,

ledge, “ That it is unlawful for subjects of whatever quality or
 “ function,---*to assemble themselves* to consult or determine in any
 “ matters---civil or ecclesiastical (except in the ordinary judge-
 “ ments) or to make leagues or bonds, — without his Majesty’s
 “ special consent.— That the *League and Covenant*, and all trea-
 “ ties following thereupon,—are not obligatory on this king-
 “ dom.— And that none—presume, upon pretext of any au-
 “ thority whatever, to require the renewing—of the said *League*
 “ and *Covenant*, or of any other *covenants* or public oaths con-
 “ cerning the government of the church—without his Majesty’s
 “ special warrant.”—Both these were enacted by the Parlia-
 “ ment 1661.

They carried the matter still farther by the *declaration* which
 they passed next year, and appointed to be subscribed in like
 manner. I give it at large, as being a short summary of the ini-
 quity now established by law. “ I—do sincerely affirm and de-
 “ clare, That I judge it unlawful to subjects upon *pretext* of re-
 “ formation, or any other pretext whatsoever, to enter into
 “ *Leagues and Covenants*, or take up arms against the King, or
 “ those commissioned by him; and that all those gatherings, con-
 “ vocations, petitions, protestations, and erecting or keeping of
 “ council-tables that were used in the beginning, and for the car-
 “ rying on of the late troubles, were unlawful and seditious :
 “ and particularly, that these oaths, whereof the one was com-
 “ monly called the *National Covenant* (as it was sworn and ex-
 “ plained in the year 1638 and thereafter) and the other en-
 “ titled a *Solemn League and Covenant*, were and are in them-
 “ selves unlawful oaths, and were taken by, and imposed upon
 “ the subjects of this kingdom, against the fundamental laws and
 “ liberties of the same; and that there lieth no obligation upon
 “ me, or any of the subjects, from the said oaths, or either of
 “ them, to endeavour any change or alteration of the govern-
 “ ment either in Church or State, as it is now established by the
 “ laws of the kingdom.”

It is plain, that whosoever swore or subscribed the above, made
 an absolute surrender of their souls and bodies, consciences and
 all to the king.—And yet the oath, commonly called the *Test*,
 enacted by the Parliament 1681, is abundantly more impious
 still;—as therein, after an oath of adherence to the *Scots* Confes-
 sion of Faith†, the above oath of *allegiance* or rather *supremacy*,
 the *instrument assertory of the Royal Prerogative*, and *declaration*,
 —are

† This was the Confession of Faith agreed upon at the Reformation from
 Popery; utterly irreconcilable to what was connected with it in this oath of
 the Test.

—are all summed up and sworn unto; so that it was no less truly than commonly filed, *The self-contradictory Test.*

And the above were sworn by multitudes of all ranks; “ So
“ that all ranks of persons in this land made them-
“ selves more and more vile, by the blackest perju-
“ ry, and the greatest apostasy from the Lord.” They even engaged themselves by Solemn oath, to oppose, to overthrow, and what in them lay—to bring to nought, all that they were bound unto by the oath of God.

The rest of this paragraph relates to the grievous persecution of the witnesses, and needs not be repeated here. We shall only observe, that as the guilt thereof has never been suitably acknowledged by the land, it is still lying on it, and crying for vengeance against it. *I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* Rev. vi. 9, 10. The less that the generation are thinking of this, they have the greater reason to fear it. See 1 Thess. v. 3.

The next paragraph relates to the defection of the generality even of the witnesses; and indeed there were only a few who kept their garments clean, in this day of trial and temptation. It is therefore acknowledged as matter of lamentation, that “ in
“ consequence of the above-mentioned usurped su-
“ premacy over the kingdom of Christ, in the year
“ 1669 and 1672 *indulgences* to some ministers
“ who had not conformed to Prelacy were granted,
“ under certain conditions, limitations and restric-
“ tions: Wherefore as these *indulgences* had their
“ rise, subsistence and conveyance from the above
“ wicked supremacy; and as the accepters of them
“ were limited and restricted in the exercise of
“ their ministry; to the acceptance of them was
“ a departure from the word of Christ’s pati-
“ ence which his servants and people in this land
“ were called to hold fast, especially in such a day
“ of trial and temptation.”

The evil of the *indulgences* is acknowledged, in the first place, as flowing from the King’s usurped supremacy in matters ecclesiastical. And it is plain, while the King assumed a power to ap-
point

point ministers to exercise their ministry among their own people, or elsewhere,—as he pleased; this was downright *Erastianism*. And the acceptance of them, in this case, implied at least an implicit homologation of such *Erastianism*. I cannot receive a favour from one, without hereby recognizing his title to give it. And they must undoubtedly be viewed in the light of a favour given and received: While the accepters of them lay at the King's mercy, according to their obedience to the *injunctions* with which they were granted; and especially while at receiving them they *acknowledged in all humility and thankfulness his Majesty's royal favour, in granting them liberty and the public exercise of their ministry*†.

The evil of them is also acknowledged, as laying the accepters of them under restrictions in the free and faithful discharge of their ministry. It must have been mutually understood betwixt the parties, that the indulged were to forbear all testimony against the courses of the times. There were severe laws against all *faithful preaching*, under the odious notion of *sedition preaching*. And they had no reason to think their indulgences were to be continued to them, longer than they paid obedience to these laws.—As matters presently stood in the church of Scotland, the act of council which first gave them their indulgences laid severe restrictions upon them; and matters were not afterwards made easier, but rather worse. “ The Lords of his Majesty's Privy Council,—in his Majesty's name command—all such outed
“ ministers, who are or shall be appointed to exercise the ministry,
“ that they constitute and keep kirk-sessions, and keep Presbyteries and Synods, as was done by all the ministers before the
“ year 1638. And the council declare, that such of them who
“ do not keep Presbyteries, shall be confined within the bounds
“ of the parishes where they preach, ay and until they give assurance to keep the Presbyteries. The council does strictly com-
“ mand and enjoin all who shall be allowed, as said is, not to admit any of their neighbour or other parishes unto their communions, nor baptize their children, nor marry any of them,
“ without the allowance of the minister of the parish to which
“ they belong, unless the parish be vacant for the time; nor to
“ countenance the people of the neighbouring or other parishes,
“ in resorting to their preachings, or deserting their own parish
“ churches: And that hereunto these give due obedience, as
“ they

† See Mr *Hutchison's* speech in name of the rest, on this occasion; *Woodrow's* History, Vol. I. p. 306.

“ they shall be answerable. And ordain these presents to be intimated to every person who shall, by the authority foresaid, be allowed the exercise of the ministry *.” Thus supposing one to be indulged in a parish adjacent to that in which he was formerly minister, (and the relation betwixt him and them was still good in the court of God and his church); and supposing the said parish to be settled with a scandalous persecuting curate: this act bound him up from doing any of the duties of a gospel-minister to these his own people, though even in his own judgment it was unwarrantable for them to submit to the ministrations of the sorry incumbent. Besides, they were hereby absolutely bound up from meeting together in Presbytery, and so from licensing or ordaining others to the work of the ministry; and consequently from a principal part of the exercise of their ministry.—There were further restrictions laid upon them afterwards; as that all of the same dioceses celebrate the communion on one and the same Lord’s day; that they preach no where but in the kirks where they were indulged,—no not even in their kirk-yards; and that all such cases as were formerly referable to Presbyteries, continue still in the same manner †, viz. referable to the Presbyteries of the curates,—which natively tended to render all discipline in their sessions utterly abortive.

It is true, they did not altogether observe these injunctions. But it is as true, that their acceptance of their *indulgences* implied a virtual obligation to observe them; especially while they did not bear an explicit testimony against them.—It is well known, that whoever did so, were immediately deprived of the benefit of the indulgence.—Thus when the paper of *instructions* was offered by the Clerk of the Council to Mr *Alexander Blair* at *Glasgow*,—he, being moved with zeal for the honour of his master, told them plainly, *he could receive no instructions from them, for regulating the exercise of his ministry; for, says he, if I should receive instructions from you, I should be your ambassador ‡*.—having in the first place received the paper out the clerk’s hand with all dutiful respect to the council. But they were immediately so enraged at his faithful freedom, that they cast him into prison. Through his ill treatment there, he soon turned dangerously ill; and with much difficulty was allowed to retire to a private house, upon caution given that he should return to prison within a limited time. In a few weeks, this faithful witness died in much joy and full assurance of faith.

What.

* *Wedrow’s history*, Vol. I. p. 305. † *Ibidem* p. 352. ‡ *Ibidem*, p. 358.

Whatever may be said, as to the success with which God blessed the ministrations of the indulged; this will not say they did right in accepting of the indulgence. No body will say, but God might bless the ministrations of some of the Prelatical incumbents in those days, or of the priests of the Church of England in our days. But that will not prove the warrantableness of Prelacy. The truth is, while it is certain that God has blessed the ministrations of ministers of very various denominations; it is as certain that the communications of divine grace are not the primary rule by which we are to judge of a cause,—but *the law and the testimony*. We have good evidence that God remarkably blessed the ministry of those who testified against the indulgence, as well as the indulged; but they could not be both right.

Many had not the offer of these *indulgences*; nay, and a goodly number had no freedom to accept of them. But all, except only a very few, were involved in defection by their acceptance of the toleration. Accordingly, we acknowledge as follows:
 “ Likewise, when the Duke of York, a professed
 “ *Papist*, was advanced to the throne, a boundless
 “ *toleration* was granted by this Popish Prince,
 “ which was plainly designed for the introduction of
 “ *Popery* and *slavery*; being expressly conveyed
 “ from the King’s absolute power, suspending and
 “ disabling all the penal statutes against *Papists*:
 “ And, instead of a due testimony offered against
 “ the same, it was *accepted* of by all the ministers
 “ of the Presbyterial denomination through the
 “ land, except a few only; with an address of
 “ thanks for the same, by a considerable number of
 “ the said ministers, in name of the rest. Where-
 “ by we have been still farther involved in the
 “ hainous guilt of departing more and more from
 “ the Lord.”

What is said of this in the *Judicial Testimony*, is so plain and full, that little needs to be added here. The King, by his letter of June 28th 1687, which the Privy Council published the 5th of July thereafter, after a declaration of his resolution to protect his Protestant subjects in the free exercise of their religion; declares also as follows: “ We do—by our sovereign authority, prerogative royal, and absolute power, suspend, stop and disable all
 penal

“ penal and sanguinary laws, made against any for non-confor-
 “ mity to the religion established by law,—or for exercising their
 “ respective worships, religions, rites and ceremonies.—And—
 “ that by the liberty granted, the peace—of our government—
 “ may not be endangered; We---command all our subjects, that
 “ as we give them leave to---serve God after their own way,---
 “ be it in private houses, chapels, or places purposely hired or
 “ built for that use, so that they take care that nothing be preach-
 “ ed or taught among them, which may any-wise tend to alie-
 “ nate the hearts of our people from us or our government, and
 “ that their meetings be peaceable, openly and publicly held,
 “ and all persons---freely admitted to them, and that they---sig-
 “ nify---to some one or more of the next privy counsellors,
 “ sheriffs, stewarts, bailies, justices of the peace, or magistrates of
 “ ---Burghs, what place or places they set apart for these uses,
 “ with the names of the preachers.—Meetings in the fields
 “ we---strictly prohibit, against all which we---leave our laws---
 “ in full force,---notwithstanding the premises; and---further
 “ command all our judges, magistrates, and officers of our forces
 “ to prosecute such as shall be guilty of the said field-conventicles,
 “ with the utmost rigour, as they would avoid our highest dis-
 “ pleasure.”---That is, all may have their liberty to worship
 God which way soever they please; provided always that they
 give way to the King’s arbitrary measures, for the introduction of
 Popery and the total subversion of the constitution: But all who
 dare to grumble or mutter a syllable against any of these, are to
 be persecuted with the utmost severity. To beguile Presbyteri-
 ans, (who in both Scotland and England were the principal sup-
 ports of civil and religious liberty) into a base silence, while these
 measures were going on,---was abundantly well known to be the
 design of this toleration.

It was therefore very unlike Presbyterians, to give a tacit ap-
 probation of this proclamation, by taking out licences for meeting-
 houses,---hereby crouching under the covert of this *broken reed*.---
 But it was strange, that a goodly number of them should subscribe
 and present an address of thanks for a proclamation, whereby the
 King set himself above the law,---granting a liberty which the
 law expressly forbad; for if he might do so in this instance, he
 might do it also in another, till all law was overturned. For the
 Parliament to have abrogated their own penal statutes against the
 genuine members of the Church of Scotland, was a mercy much
 to be desired; but for the King, by his own usurped absolute
 power, to suspend all penal statutes---even against Papists, (the he-
 reditary enemies of our religion and liberties,)---was an inundati-

on of evil to be steadfastly and vigorously opposed.---But it was stranger still, that they should return thanks for such a toleration, without testifying at all against the evil of it; nay, that, instead of saying any thing of the evil nature or tendency of it, they should even magnify it as a *gracious and surprising favour, and bless God that he had put it into the King's royal heart**.---And yet, by this very act which they so highly praise, they were expressly prohibited to *teach what might any-wise tend to alienate the hearts of the people from the King or his government*; which in the sense of this Popish and arbitrary Prince, and in fact, all faithful preaching against Popery or arbitrary government had a native tendency to do. To accept of this liberty therefore, with thankfulness to the giver of it, in these circumstances,---was a laying of a material obligation (or at least a snare) on themselves, to forbear what was the especial duty of the day.---Nay, as the penal statutes against Papists, as well as Presbyterians and others, were hereby suspended; and as it was manifest, that the latter were now favoured only for the sake of the former,---particularly the getting of them into places of power and trust: *Such an address* was a mean-spirited connivance at an undermining of our legal and noble securities against an inundation of Popery.---Accordingly, a goodly number, though they had freedom to take the benefit of this toleration, were utterly against any addresses of thanks for it, ---and therefore did not join in any such addresses.

Those therefore who, without making any account of this toleration, preached in houses or fields as they had occasion †,---
acted

* See *Wodrow's history*, Vol. II. p. 618.

† It is in this manner that *Seceders* both in *Scotland* and *England*, carry themselves, with respect to the present toleration.—It is a reproaching of them as fools to insinuate, that they look on themselves as enjoying the benefit of the Acts of Parliament with which their principles were legally secured in the last period of reformation: They know, that these are now no more.—Both the acts of toleration now in force, are clogged with such conditions as they cannot in a consistency with their principles comply with. Besides, they were passed before the *Secession* began, and the present testimony was stated; and so take no cognizance of *Seceders* or their principles, more than if they were not. They cannot therefore either in *England* or *Scotland* have or claim the benefit of those acts.—But they consider the free and public exercise of the true religion, which can never be inconsistent with the peace and security of civil government, as their natural and unalienable privilege,—and make open profession of it accordingly. They reap the benefit of a mild administration, which does not put the laws which might (perhaps) be construed to strike against them—into execution; but considering them in their peculiar situation as *Seceders* adhering to a *Covenanted Reformation*,—they have not the benefit of any law in their favour; because there really is none. Considering them in common with other Protestant subjects,—*secu-*
rity

acted certainly the most honourable, as well as the most honest and consistent, part.—In a word, though nothing is more desirable than when liberty of conscience is established and maintained as a *right* ; yet nothing can be more abominable than when the true religion is tolerated under the notion of a *crime*, and the exercise thereof only allowed under such and such restrictions,—as was the nature of this toleration.

Thus our religion and liberties lay at the mercy of this Popish and arbitrary Prince. And matters continued in this melancholy and deplorable situation, till the ever memorable and merciful *Revolution*. When the hearts of all true Protestants were trembling for fear, under awful apprehensions of the utter ruin of our religion and liberty; *the Lord turned again our captivity, as the streams in the South*,—by the instrumentality of the Prince of *Orange*, afterwards King William III, of precious memory.—And as the Lord, by his almighty hand and outstretched arm, saved us from the gulf of Popery and slavery that was just on the point of swallowing us up,—and restored us again to the capacity of acting as a free people; after making the great sin and folly of our apostasy most manifest in the judgments he had executed upon us: It might well have been expected, that we would have returned to him, by an unfeigned and particular acknowledgment of our iniquities. But instead of this, we *held fast deceit and would not let it go* ; and *provoked him at sea, even the red sea* : which has proved the source of a melancholy and continued course of defection ever since that time. The Revolution itself was a glorious appearance of divine providence in behalf of a sinful and miserable nation. But our misimprovement of it can never be sufficiently lamented. For,

“ When the Estates of the nation were met in
 “ a free Parliament in the year 1690, our Presby-
 “ terial church-government was settled according
 “ to its civil establishment in the year 1592 ;
 “ and all the steps of reformation attained to in
 “ that covenanting period betwixt 1638 and 1650,
 “ were neglected and passed by : yea, in the said set-
 “ tlement of Presbytery, all that was done against
 “ a co-

city is given, by the present civil government, unto their religion, lives and liberties, such as no other people now on earth enjoys the like ; but considering them, in respect of the testimony which they bear against the defection of all ranks from attained-to reformation,—whatever laws they may have against them, they have none for them.

“ a covenanted work of reformation, in the first
 “ Session of Parliament of King *Charles*, after his
 “ restoration, is left untouched†; Particularly the
 “ infamous *act* Recifory, whereby all the acts and
 “ deeds of the foresaid covenanting period were
 “ declared null and void, is never repealed: Also
 “ that

† In the *Testimony*, this article is expressed thus: “ Likewise all the acts of
 “ the first Session of the first Parliament of King *Charles* II, together with
 “ the infamous *act* *Recifory* (anno 1661,) whereby a Covenanted Reformation
 “ was razed, and the acts and deeds of that covenanting period were declared
 “ seditious and treasonable, are left untouched in this above-mentioned settle-
 “ ment of Presbytery.”—One of the acts, however, of that first Session of
 Parliament, was rescinded at the Revolution; viz. the 17th thereof, for ob-
 serving the 29th of May as an anniversary thanksgiving for the King’s resto-
 ration. But the *Testimony* and *Acknowledgment of sins* are not therefore to be
 charged with a mistake in the matter. For (1.) They speak of what was
 left untouched in the act of settlement,—the same being the special standard
 whereby to judge of the legal establishment of religion. But the said anni-
 versary was not annulled in it, but by another act and sometime afterwards.
 (2.) The rescinding of it was in a way of abstracting intirely from all other
 or further consideration of it, than as *now either useless or found to be hurtful*;
 which a very good thing may come in process of time to be. So that all the
 real effect of this rescinding was the people’s freedom from any legal obliga-
 tion to observe that anniversary, and the danger of persecution for the non-
 observance of it; without any revival of any of the acts whereby a covenanted
 reformation was authorised, or burial of the acts whereby it was overturn-
 ed. (3.) Whatever venom is spued out in the preface to the said anniversa-
 ry act, against the late covenanted reformation, which was already razed by
 several preceding acts; yet the act itself could not, in any common reckoning,
 be classed among the acts razing the said covenanted reformation,—which yet
 are the only acts which the *Testimony* or *Acknowledgment of sins* here speak of;
 but among the acts rearing up a new fabric in the place thereof. So that it
 still holds true, That all that was done against a covenanted work of reformati-
 on, in the way of razing it or pulling it down, in the first Session of Parliament
 of King *Charles* after his restoration,—is left altogether untouched in the act of
 settlement,—and indeed in every other act of Parliament since that time.

I know not, whether the rescinding of the above anniversary act was advert-
 ed to in compiling the *Testimony* and *Acknowledgment of sins*, or not; but as the
 Rev. Mr *Scot* of *Gateshaw* observes in his *Brief Comparison*, p. 25,—if there
 had been any notice taken of it, it must have been, if expressed with due cau-
 tion, to this purpose, “ That as that wicked act of the first Session of the first
 “ Parliament of King *Charles* II. concerning an anniversary thanksgiving,
 “ was not repealed in the act of settlement at the Revolution; so though it was
 “ afterwards repealed by a separate act, yet it was not repealed as levelled a-
 “ gainst a covenanted reformation, but only as useless, or, at most as hurt-
 “ ful;” which would not make the resolution-settlement a whit better than
 the *Testimony* and *Acknowledgment of sins* represent it.—It must therefore have
 argued a prodigious fondness for having the *testimony* run down, to foist in
 this affair as an instance of the falshood of it.

“ that wicked and impious act, the second act of the
 “ second Session of the same Parliament, declaring
 “ null and void the proceedings of that faithful As-
 “ sembly at Glasgow in the year 1638, and all o-
 “ ther acts and deeds of that reforming period,
 “ stands in the body of our Scots laws to this very
 “ day.”

This was undoubtedly, at best, a very defective establishment of Presbyterian church-government, when compared with the footing upon which it stood in the reforming period between 1638 and 1650; especially as much of the rubbish of former laws—inconsistent with the due rights of Presbytery, was not in the first place removed out of the way,—but left in full force, to the danger of the new building. That this was the real case, will appear from the following authentic account of the matter:

By act of Parliament, July 22d 1689, *Prelacy* is abolished in the manner following, viz. “ Whereas the estates of this
 “ kingdom in their *claim of right*,---declared, that Prelacy, and
 “ the superiority of any office in the church above Presbyters,
 “ is and hath been a great and insupportable grievance to this na-
 “ tion, and contrary to the inclinations of the generality of the
 “ people ever since the reformation, they having reformed from
 “ Popery by Presbyters, and therefore ought to be abolished;
 “ our sovereign Lord and Lady, the King and Queen’s Majes-
 “ ties, with advice and consent of the Estates of Parliament, do
 “ hereby abolish Prelacy, and all superiority of any office in the
 “ church in this kingdom above Presbyters, and hereby rescinds
 “ —all acts—in so far alienarly as they are inconsistent with this
 “ act:—And declare that—they—will settle—that church go-
 “ vernment,—which is most agreeable to the inclinations of the
 “ people.”—Thus Prelacy is abolished, in pursuance of the
people’s claim of right, but not in pursuance of *Christ’s* claim of
 right,—as being contrary to the inclinations of the people, but
 not as being contrary to the laws of the church’s Head,—or as
 having been abjured by our Solemn Covenants. If it had so hap-
 pened, that Prelacy had been most agreeable to the inclinations of
 the people,—as having been reformed from Popery by Bishops;
 the very same reason would have obliged them to have continued
 Prelacy.

Accordingly, by act of Parliament, June 7th 1690 (near a year
 after the fore said abolition of Prelacy) Presbytery is established
 in the manner following, viz. “ The King and Queen’s Majes-
 “ ties

“ ties and three Estates of Parliament, conceiving it to be their
 “ duty,—in the first place to settle—the true Protestant religi-
 “ on ;—as also the government of Christ’s church,—agreeable
 “ to the word of God, and most conducive to the advancement
 “ of true piety and godliness, and the establishing of peace and
 “ tranquility within this realm :—They—ratify—the *Confession*
 “ of Faith, now read in their presence,—as the public and a-
 “ vowed Confession of this church †, containing the sum and sub-
 stance

† Perhaps, there has been a tincture of *Eraslianism*, in the best legal establishment of religion that has hitherto taken place in the Christian world. It is plain, there was a very great degree of it in the Revolution-establishment. For the *Parliament* to read, judge, vote and establish a *Confession a Faith* for the whole *Church* of Scotland,—and that even without making any account of the Church herself having formerly adopted it ; was undoubtedly as great a stretch of *Eraslianism* as ever was presumed upon in any country : It was manifestly claiming and exercising a power purely spiritual,—and so no-wise competent to a civil judicatory. The essential difference between civil and ecclesiastical judicatories makes it evident, that things only *as civil* are cognizable by the former ; even as things only *as spiritual* are cognizable by the latter.

However, I would not by this be thought to condemn all legal establishment of the true religion. It is undoubtedly competent unto the civil powers to establish, secure and protect their subjects in the full and peaceable enjoyment of their natural rights ; and religious rights (though supernatural with respect to God,—yet, with respect to fellow-creatures) are no other than natural rights—versant about religious matters. Thus supposing the Church to make due profession of the true religion, and the civil rulers to be in communion with her,—it is competent unto them in their judicative capacity, to declare, That as they, in the character of church-members, are fully satisfied about the truth of that profession of religion which is made by the Church ; so they guarantee, secure and confirm her in the full and peaceable enjoyment of it,—against all that would attempt to undermine her constitution, or deprive her of her privileges. Again, when the Church attains to further degrees of reformation, and applies to the civil powers for a law securing her in the possession of it,—it is in like manner competent unto them, to pass a law securing her in the possession of it accordingly. Besides, it is competent unto them to provide the Church in a honourable maintenance, and to protect her in the possession and enjoyment of it against all invaders whatsoever.—All this, we say, is competent unto, and consequently incumbent upon, the civil powers, as the guardians of the natural rights belonging to themselves and other church-members,—without going out of their sphere as civil rulers, encroaching upon the peculiar business of the Church, or infringing the liberty of any man’s conscience. And laws to all this effect are proper enough to be enforced with civil pains and punishments,—as a transgression of them would amount unto a plain and palpable breach of the peace.

The several pieces of reformation attained unto by the Church of Scotland between 1638 and 1650 were secured to her by the Parliament,—against a malignant party in the kingdom who struggled with might and main to deprive her of them, and to get the insupportable yoke of Prelacy and un-
 situated

stance of the doctrine of the reformed churches ;—as also they
 “ —ratify—the Presbyterian church-government and discipline,
 “ —established by the 114th act *Ja. VI. Parl. 12. anno 1592*,—
 “ and thereafter received *, by the general consent of this nation,
 “ --confirming the foresaid act,--in the whole heads thereof, ex-
 “ cept that part of it relating to patronages, which is hereafter to
 “ be taken into consideration; and Rescinding--Act anent restitu-
 “ tion of Bishops, *Ja. VI. Parl. 18. Cap. 2.* Act ratifying the
 “ Acts of the Assembly 1610, *Ja. VI. Parl. 21. Cap. 1.* Act
 “ anent the election of Archbishops and Bishops, *Ja. VI. Parl.*
 “ *23. Cap. 1.* Act intituled, Ratification of the five articles of the
 “ General Assembly at *Perth*, *Ja. VI. Parl. 23. Cap. 1.* † Act
 “ intituled, For the Restitution--of the Government of the Church
 “ by Archbishops and Bishops, *Charl. II. Parl. 1. Sess. 2.* Act 1.
 “ Anent the constitution of a National Synod, *Charl. II. Parl. 1.*
 “ *Sess. 3.* Act 5.—with all other acts,—and that in so far alle-
 “ narily as the said acts—are contrary to—the Protestant religion
 “ and Presbyterian government.”—

For obviating objections here, we offer the following observa-
 tions.

1. Though the *Westminster* Confession was ratified in the act
 of settlement—of which we have just now given an abstract; we
 are not therefore to think that it is a mistake to say,—*That all*
the steps of reformation attained to in that covenanting period between
1638 and 1650, were neglected and passed by in that act:—while
 the *Confession* was not hereby ratified, as a part of our covenant-
 ed uniformity,—but only as *containing the sum and substance of the*
doctrine of the reformed churches: and while no particular account

is

stituted ceremonies wreathed about her neck. Church and State thus joined
 hand in hand, in a vindication and defence of their just rights and privileges.
 The Parliament not only withdrew all legal encouragement from preceding
 corruptions and impositions; but gave positive countenance and support un-
 to the Church in carrying on the work of God. And in this respect, we
 bear testimony to the State as well as the Church reformation of that period.
 —Various pieces of attained-to reformation were overlooked and passed by,
 without any security given to the Church in the profession of them, by the
 Revolution-Parliament; and the Revolution-Church sat down upon this es-
 tablishment of her rights, without remonstrating against the defects thereof:
 And we bear testimony against both accordingly.

* It is here said to be *thereafter received*; but without any notice taken of
 its being afterwards *revived* in the year 1638, after the burial of it in the pre-
 ceding period.

† The four preceding acts, with some others of a like nature, had been
 previously (and more suitably) rescinded by *Charl. I. Parl. 2. Sess. 1. Act 6.*
 1640. which is a notable evidence of the Revolution-Parliament overlooking
 the Reformation-period between 1638 and 1650.

is made of the act of Assembly 1647 adopting the said *Confession*, or of the necessary limitation and explication with which it was adopted in that act, or yet of the ratification thereof by the Parliament 1749—according to the said act of Assembly; while, I say, no account is made of any of these,—but it is mentioned by the Estates of Parliament at this time, under a new designation as if it had never existed before that very day, viz. *The Confession now read in our presence*. If these things are considered, the ratification of the Confession of Faith says nothing at all to the revival of a covenanted reformation, or of any part of it.---In the fore said Act of Assembly 1647, approving the Confession of Faith, and which is prefixed to it, and so is in every body's hand,—the Assembly assert and declare the intrinsic power of the church for holding her own assemblies (which is a special branch of our Redeemer's Headship in and over his spiritual kingdom)—the same not being clearly expressed in the *Confession* itself; and the Parliament 1649 ratify the *Confession* accordingly; not merely the Confession itself, but the Assembly's *approbation* of it. But the Revolution-parliament take no notice of this, more than it had never been,—perhaps as having no mind to establish the intrinsic power of the church, or to make favourable mention of any of the acts of that hated period. If it had not been from an aversion to the act 1649 on one or both these accounts, it is natural to suppose they would have revived it. Thus the Confession as received by the Assembly 1647 and the Parliament 1649, and adhered unto by *Seceders*, and as ratified by the Revolution-parliament,---is not altogether the same. In the former respect, it asserts the intrinsic power of the church; in the latter, it leaves it ambiguous and undetermined. In the former respect, it is considered as a principal part of our covenanted reformation; in the latter, it is considered only as the sum and substance of the doctrine of the reformed churches.

2. Though the Estates of Parliament use the words—*agreeable to the word of God*, when speaking of the government of the Church which they are going to establish; we are not therefore to think that they hereby mean to allow of the divine right of Presbytery. For (1.) as was taken notice of already, *Prelacy* is not abolished at contrary to the word of, but only as contrary to the inclinations of the people. Now, if *Prelacy* is not condemned as in itself contrary to the word of God; it is plain, Presbytery could not be established as in itself *agreeable to the word of God*,--in the proper sense of these words, as signifying, *founded in and required by the word of God*. The plain meaning then of the fore-mentioned words is, that whatever form of Church-government

most agreeable to the inclinations of the people, is also and for that reason—agreeable to the word of God; and that as Presbytery was most agreeable to the inclinations of the people in Scotland, it was therefore and for that reason (abstracting intirely from the divine right thereof) most agreeable to the word of God also in Scotland,—as Prelacy was at the same time, on the same ground, reckoned to be in England. So that instead of an establishment of the divine right of Presbytery, we have a plain burial of the divine right of any form of church-government whatsoever. (2.) Presbytery is not established as a branch of the true Protestant religion, but as something different from it. Accordingly, in the preamble to the forementioned act, we have these expressions,—*in the first place to settle the true protestant religion, as also the government of Christ's church.* Agreeably hereunto, in the statutory part of it,—*they ratify and establish the Confession of Faith* (meaning hereby what they call in the preamble—the true Protestant religion); *as also, they ratify and confirm the Presbyterian church-government and discipline.* Thus it is plain, that Presbytery is not established as a part of the true Protestant religion,—but as a thing different from it, and no part of it; and consequently not as of divine, but only as of human right.

3. In this settlement of Presbytery, a pattern is taken from the act 1592.—In *answers by the Associate Presbytery to Mr Nairn*, p. 52, it is said, “By the act 1592, according to which Presbytery was settled at the Revolution, the Assembly is deprived of power, where the King or his Commissioner are present, to nominate and appoint time and place for their next meeting.” How far this is a just construction of the act 1592, may be freely left to the reader, after he has perused the following article thereof: “And declaris that it fall be lauchful to the kirk and ministers everie zier at the least, and oftner *pro re nata*, as occasion and necessitie fall require, to hald--Generall Assemblies: providing that the King's Majestie, or his Cummissioners, with them to be appoynted be his Hieneffe, be present at ilk Generall Assemblie, before the dissolving thereof, nominate and appoynt time and place quhen and quhair the nixt Generall Assemblie fall be halden: And in case neither his Majestie nor his said Cummissioners beis present for the time in that toun quhair the said Generall Assemblie beis halden; then and in that case, it fall be lesum to the said Generall Assemblie, be themselves, to nominate and appoynt time and place quhair the nixt Generall Assemblie of the kirk fall be halden, as they have been in use to do thir times by-past.” The question here is not about what construction our ancestors in those days put u-

pon this act, but about its obvious sense and meaning. And it is as plain as any thing can be, that it lodges the power of appointing time and place of next Assembly with the King or his Commissioners, provided any of them be present in the Assembly or town where the Assembly is held; and consequently, in that case at least, deprives the Assembly of her own intrinsic power for that purpose.—Yet this act was the pattern according to which Presbytery was settled at the Revolution. So that when King *William* by his Commissioner dissolved the Assembly 1692, and adjourned the same from time to time till the year 1694; he did nothing but what he was by the *act of Settlement* intitled to do,—however far wrong his doing so was in itself.

But this is not all: In the settlement of Presbytery at this time, recourse is had to the forementioned act 1592,—in the way of plainly overlooking all the further reformation, with the legal securities given thereunto, from the year 1638 to the year 1650.—Signal advances had been made in reformation-work, in the period last mentioned. Particularly, the parliament, by act 4th 1640, ratified an act of Assembly, *ordaining that Episcopal government be holden unlawful in this kirk, being not warranted by the word of God; as also, the civil places and power of kirkmen, being incompatible with their spiritual function: and further, that in time coming, General Assemblies rightly constitute, as the proper and competent judge of all matters ecclesiastical, hereafter be kept yearly, and oftner pro re nata, as occasion and necessity shall require; (the necessity of these occasional Assemblies being first remonstrated to his Majesty by humble supplication;—*which was a considerable step beyond what was attained unto by act 1592. By act 5th that same year, they ratified an act of Assembly, *ordaining the subscription of the National Covenant; as then explained, to abjure the five articles of Perth, the government of the kirk by Bishops, with the civil places and power of kirkmen: And they further ordained the same to be presented at the entry of every Parliament, and before they proceed to any other act, that the same be publicly read and sworn by the whole members of Parliament claiming voice therein.* By act 5th 1644, they ratified the Solemn League and Covenant, with the act of Assembly authorizing the same. — By act 2d 1645, they ratified the *Directory for Public Worship*. By act 15th 1649, they added to the King's Coronation oath, a swearing “ his allowance of the National Covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant; and “ obligation to prosecute the ends thereof in his station and calling: and that he shall for himself and his successors, consent “ and agree to acts of Parliament injoining the Solemn League “ and Covenant, and fully establishing Presbyterian Church-government;—

“*vernment*; — as they are approved by the General Assembly of this kirk, and Parliament of this kingdom, in all his Majesty’s dominions.” By act 16th that same year, they ratified the act of Assembly, approving the *Westminster Confession*, in the manner formerly observed. By act 26th that same year also, they “*statute and ordain*, that no person that is malignant, and disaffected to the *present work of Reformation and Covenants*—shall hereafter be—employed in any place of public power and trust within this kindom.” And, to add no more of the many valuable pieces of reformation then attained unto,—by act 39th that same remarkable year, they brake the yoke of *Patronage*, as a *Papish custom that bath no warrant in God’s word*.—Here were several eminent pieces of reformation, and valuable securities to the Church and government thereof,—and all overlooked in the *Act of Settlement* 1690. Nor is there any one of them revived to this very day. For

4. That the infamous act Rescissory, whereby all the acts and deeds of the foresaid covenanting period were declared null and void, is never repealed,—is no less true than mournful. It is an undoubted fact, that none of the acts or deeds of that period are known in law, but by the act Rescissory, in its abolishing of them; and there is not the least mention made of the act Rescissory in any act at or since the Revolution. Accordingly, though the *index or abridgement of the acts of Parliament* from the year 1424 to the Union in the year 1707, by Sir James Stewart the King’s advocate, (a book of common use among lawyers, and printed with a privilege by the Lords of Privy Council;) though, I say, it condescends upon the several laws both before and after the foresaid covenanting period,—as to what they import and when they were made, with the several rescindings and revivings which any of them had at any time undergone: yet both the Parliaments and laws of that period, which came to be annulled at the Restoration,—are there passed in silence as if they had never been; further than that the acts Rescissory, overthrowing these Parliaments and laws with the whole work of Reformation in that period,—are there laid down in the same way as any other *standing laws*, without any insinuation of their having been any manner of way rescinded at the Revolution. These are indisputable facts.

5. No argument can be drawn from the *general Rescissory clause* in the act of Settlement above-mentioned, for the revival thereby of the acts and deeds of the covenanting period. Whatever acts or deeds may be supposed to be affected by it, it is not to be supposed that any of these can be affected by it. Because while the Parli-

Parliaments themselves lay buried by the act Rescissory, their acts were utterly incapable of ratification. But as was hinted already, none of those Parliaments are known in law, otherwise than by the *act Rescissory*,—consigning them and all their acts and proceedings to everlasting oblivion. It is contrary to all reason to imagine they could be revived, while the act Rescissory stood; and it is equally absurd to fancy that a fair general can amount unto a rescinding of it.—The truth is, the Rescissory clause in the act of Settlement can amount unto no more, with respect to any laws whatsoever,—than a general reviving and ratifying of such of them as should be found agreeable, and rescinding of such of them as should be found disagreeable, unto the particular settlement which was otherwise made by the act of Settlement itself; and so could have no import of reviving the acts and deeds of the covenanting period.

Further, instead of finding a revival of a covenanted Reformation in the said act of Settlement, it is easy to find a burial of the whole laws and deeds of the covenanting period in it. It finds and leaves our Solemn Covenants, with all that was done in that period in pursuance of the ends of them, abrogated, dead and buried. It passes them over, as if they had never been. While instead of reviving the act 1649 receiving the Confession of Faith, it ratifies it anew, as if it had never been legally established before, ---and in a way too, of abstracting intirely from the bygone reforming consideration thereof, as a covenanted point of uniformity in the three kingdoms,---according to what was already taken notice of: And while instead of reviving the act 1649 abolishing patronages, it reserves the same to further consideration†. One thing is quite plain, if the *general clause rescissory* in the act of Settlement could have been constructed as rescinding the infamous act Rescissory 1662; there was no necessity for ratifying the Confession or abolishing patronages; on the act Rescissory being abrogated, the former acts ratifying the Confession and abolishing patronages revived of course. We shall find further evidence of the burial of a covenanted Reformation in this act, in a little.

6. No.

† Nay, and when they came afterwards to abolish patronages, it was not in the way of reviving the act 1649; that act lies still buried among the other rubbish of Zion's walls: But in the way of passing a new act, as if such a thing had never been done before; which is a farther evidence of the revolution-Parliament overlooking the covenanting period between 1638 and 1650.—The right of presentation was in a few years afterwards restored to Patrons. That the Christian people have no title to chuse their own pastors, but that it belongs to patrons to present whom they please, is as much a part of the true religion presently authorised by the laws of Scotland therefore, as the patronages had never been abolished.

6. No argument can be drawn from the rescinding of some laws, which bound the subjects upon severe penalties to abjure a covenanted Reformation,---to a revival thereby of those laws whereby a covenanted Reformation was warranted and authorised. It is acknowledged, the Revolution-Parliament did the former,---partly in the act of Settlement, and partly in other acts. But this amounted unto no more than a freeing of the subjects from tyranny and butchery, on account of their owning our Solemn Covenants; and from being obliged formally to condemn, renounce and abjure them,---as the indispensable condition of enjoying the protection of government: It was at most a rescuing of them from the yoke of slavery, which had been bound on their necks in the persecuting times. Here was a vindication of human nature, from the injustice and indignities which had been offered to it,---but no vindication of our Solemn Covenants from the indignities which had been offered to them. The truth is, there were various laws of this sort, which came of course to be abrogated, according to the new settlement in both Church and State; and were abrogated accordingly, to the great advantage of civil and religious liberty.---That such was the whole amount of the matter, is abundantly evident from this, that none of the laws razing a covenanted Reformation are abrogated, and so none of the laws in favour of a covenanted Reformation are revived,---though some of the laws making it punishable to own it to be lawful, are abrogated: Now, it is easy to see, that there is a wide difference between the making of a thing cease to be penal, and the allowing of it to be lawful and bounden duty. Thus when the act of Settlement (of which we have given an abstract) comes forward to a particular rescinding of some laws in the persecuting reign of *Charles II*, it intirely overleaps all the laws of the first Session of his first Parliament; though these were the laws whereby a covenanted Reformation was razed to the ground; and containing among others, the infamous act Rescissory. And as it begins with rescinding the first act of the second Session of that Parliament; so it again overleaps the very next, or the second act of that Session: though this was that infamous act, whereby the famous Assembly which met at *Glasgow* in the year 1638, was declared to be an unlawful and seditious meeting; and whereby all that was done between the said year and the year 1651 in prosecution of a covenanted Reformation, was declared rebellious and treasonable; and whereby the National Covenant as explained and sworn in the year 1638, together with the Solemn League and Covenant, were declared to be unlawful oaths, and not binding on the lands; nay, and whereby it is declared to be a treasonable
and

and seditious position to say, That it is lawful for subjects to enter into Leagues and Covenants for Reformation. Mr *Wodrow* in his history, (Vol. I. p. 118, 119.) says, “ This declaration runs so flatly in the face of Scripture, reason, and the approved practice of many, that it is a shame and reproach that it stands in the body of our Scots laws; and casts a slur upon our excellent reformation from Popery, which upon the matter is here declared to have been seditious and treasonable.”

This whole matter is briefly summed up in the *introduction* to the Synod’s proceedings in 1747 and 1748. p. 25, 26. “ That the abolishing of *Prelacy* was upon consideration of its being a great and insupportable grievance to this nation (which even a good thing can be to an ill or prejudiced nation); and contrary to the inclinations of the generality of the people ever since the Reformation, (which was a reason wholly political); they having reformed from Popery by *Presbyters*, (which was a ground merely occasional): And the *State-act* did thus abolish *Prelacy*, according to the people’s claim of right; without acknowledging any old, or calling for any new church-act, which had or might have condemned it according to Christ’s claim of right in the matter. That the settlement of *Presbytery* was in pursuance of the act abolishing *Prelacy* according to the claim of right; in the close of which act there had been a resolution declared to settle by law that Church-government in this kingdom which is most agreeable to the inclinations of the people: And this settlement of *Presbytery* was in a way of reviving the former settlement thereof 1592; without considering that revival of the said act 1592, with the further reformation concerning it, or any further legal securities to this church,—which had afterwards taken place in the late covenanting period. That in the above settlement of *Presbytery*, some old acts were rescinded, which had already been (and more suitably) rescinded in the said covenanting period, without any consideration of their having been so: And the part of the act 1592 relating to *Patronages*, was reserved for after consideration; without regard to its having been already made void by the Parliament 1649. That whatever be said in some Revolution-acts, about reviving any former laws; yet they have never a word about reviving any former Parliaments betwixt 1640 and 1650, which had become annulled,—though it was not till the revival of these former Parliaments, that any thing they had done could come to be legally understood as belonging to the category of former laws. That those acts of the first session of Parliament at the Restoration, with the second act of the second session

“ thereof,

" thereof, whereby the late covenanted Reformation had been
 " awfully overthrown,—were not *condescended upon* or *culled out*
 " by any *rescissory* acts or clauses at the Revolution; though some
 " other acts of that Restoration-Parliament were so. That tho'
 " some *tyrannical* and *bloody acts* of the late reigns, which did
 " properly look *forward*, striking directly against the *subjects* who
 " should own or not renounce the Covenants,—were rescinded
 " at the Revolution: Yet there had been some other wicked acts
 " before these, which did properly look *backward*, striking di-
 " rectly against the *Covenants themselves* as they had been so-
 " lemnly entered into and prosecuted under the foregoing period;
 " discharging any *renovation* of them without his Majesty's war-
 " rant, and afterwards declaring them in *themselves unlawful*
 " oaths, and pretending to dissolve the *obligation* thereof,—as also;
 " declaring against that former *covenanting work*, as if it had been
 " *seditious, rebellious* and *treasonable*; which acts were not conde-
 " scended upon or culled out by any *rescissory* acts or clauses at
 " the Revolution. And, in a word, that in any acts at the Re-
 " volution there was no mention made of the late *reformation-*
 " *work*, or of our *Solemn Covenants*,—more than such thing *had*
 " *never been.*"

And so there is melancholly ground for acknowledging as
 follows: " And thus that great work, which the Lord
 " wrought with an outstretched arm in the days of
 " our fathers, lies still buried under the grave-
 " stone of several Parliamentary acts and deeds;
 " which is an iniquity that testifies against us to
 " this very day."—It is no otherwise known in law, than
 as abrogated, dead and buried.

It is added in the close of this paragraph, " Likewise by
 " the same Parliament, in the year 1690*, instead
 " of our Covenant-allegiance, which was judged a
 " proper badge of loyalty in our reforming peri-
 " ods, a general oath of allegiance to the Sovereign
 " was imposed."—The sinfulness of the *oath of allegiance* is
 here

* The oath of allegiance was first framed and imposed upon all in public
 trust in the year 1689, viz. by the 2d act of the 1st session of the Revolu-
 tion-Parliament. But it was imposed upon various others by various other
 acts in the year 1690. By act 4th this year, the Parliament declare, " That
 " it is the duty of all the subjects to take the oath of allegiance, if called
 " thereto." So that it was rather more eminently imposed in the year 1690,
 than the year 1689.

here acknowledged,—on account of the *generality* of it, as well as on account of being imposed *in place* of the oath of our Covenants.

It is acknowledged to be sinful, as being only a *general* oath of allegiance. The generality of it will appear from a copy of it, which I have subjoined at the foot †. Now, as the *Associate Synod* observe, in their *declaration concerning the clause of civil allegiance in some Burgeſs-oaths*, paſſed at *Edinburgh, Auguſt 6, 1747*,—
 “ A *general allegiance* muſt neceſſarily be underſtood as deriving
 “ all its limitations ‡ immediately from the ſtanding conſtitutions
 “ and laws of the land,—and therefore containing a general ap-
 “ probation of theſe conſtitutions and laws.” It is plain, it muſt either do ſo, or be abſolutely unlimited.—Under a very ſimple appearance, it is in reality of a very complex nature. Inſtead of being duly qualified, ſo as the ſwearer may clearly underſtand the meaning of what he ſwears, the import thereof is left to be fetcht from the laws preſently in being, declarative of the ſubject’s duty to his Sovereign. *Fidelity* and *true allegiance* in the oath, are what the laws declare to be ſo. It is a moſt vain fancy to imagine, that they comprehend no more than what the ſwearer himſelf judges to be right; becauſe even after he has taken the oath in this light, no aſſurance at all is thereby given to the Magiſtrate, the imposer of the oath, and for whoſe behoof it is taken,—and ſo the end thereof is fruſtrated, Heb. vi. 16. But the ſtate of matters neither at nor ſince the Revolution was ever ſuch, that one might warrantably ſwear an oath which derived all its limitations from the laws of the land, and which *generally* homologated the ſettlement of matters between King and ſubject.

Again, the ſinfulneſs of the oath of allegiance is acknowledged, as being imposed *in place* of the oath of our Covenants. That it was ſo, will appear, if it is conſidered.—That the *claim of right* provides that no preceding oaths whatſoever ſhall ever be requir-
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† “ I A. B. do ſincerely promiſe and ſwear, that I will be faithful, and
 “ bear true allegiance to their Maſtieſties King *William* and Queen *Mary*. So
 “ help me God.”

‡ The author of the *Apological Relation* (p. 119.) tells us, “ All divines
 “ and caſuiſts do grant, that an oath muſt be taken in his ſenſe and mean-
 “ ing in whoſe favours and for whoſe ſake and ſafety it is conceived and who
 “ tendereth it: And therefore it is not only lawful but neceſſary, to inquire
 “ what ſenſe the acts and actings of the Parliament do put upon it.” *Qua-*
cunque arte verborum quis juret, Deus tamen, qui conſcientia teſtis eſt, ita hoc in-
telligit, ſicut ille cui juratur, intelligit. Ibid. De jura. bon. “ By whatever de-
 “ ceit of words one may ſwear, yet God, who is witneſs of the conſcience, ſo
 “ reckons of it as he to whom the oath is ſworn underſtands it.”

ed by law; and consequently provides that the oath of our Covenants shall never be required by law: for the last article of it is, "That the oath—of allegiance, *already mentioned*, be taken " by all Protestants, of whom the oath of allegiance, *formerly in* " *force*, and any other oaths and declarations might be required " by law, instead of them; and that the said oath of allegiance, " and other oaths and declarations may be abrogated:"—And that the act of Parliament, which imposed the oath of allegiance, bears an express reference to the said claim of right,—and accordingly " rescinds all preceding laws and acts of Parliament, in so far " as they impose any other oaths of allegiance, supremacy, de- " clarations and tests, excepting the oath *de fidei*."—'Tis true, it may be alledged, that nothing is meant by the oaths mentioned in the above act of Parliament and claim of right, but the sinful oaths in the preceding period which were still in force till they were now abrogated. But the *Associate Presbytery*, (as Mr *Wilson* observes in his *Defence*, p. 319.) did foresee this objection, and therefore they explain themselves thus: " Yet the terms in which " the act of Parliament is conceived, appear plainly to exclude " the oath of the Covenant, which contained a very solemn test " of allegiance to the Sovereign; especially when it is consider- " ed, that the above-mentioned act *Rescissory* was not repealed." They enjoined the oath of allegiance; at the same time, they did not repeal the act *Rescissory*, or revive the oath of our Covenants. Thus the strength of the Presbytery's reasoning lies not abstractly in the *generality of expression* used in the foresaid act of Parliament or claim of right,—but in comparing the foresaid clauses in both, with the continued burial of the oath of our Covenants.

Further, our Covenant-allegiance was judged a proper badge of loyalty in our reforming periods. Persons were accounted of as hearty friends to the welfare of Church and State, while they were hearty friends to our Solemn Covenants. And indeed the friends of the one could not but be the friends of the other: While our Covenants contained not only an oath of adherence to the truths of God; but also an oath of allegiance to the King,—in reality comprehending, though not particularly expressing, all the duties that subjects owe to their Sovereigns †.—Without con-

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† In the Solemn League, our reformers swore, to *endeavour, with their estates and lives, to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the kingdom.* Not as if they meant, that no allegiance, fidelity or obedience was due, or to be given, to him,—but when, and in so far as, he did actually own, and contribute his utmost for the promoting and establishing of religion and the li-
berties

found Church and State, or blending the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions together,—it was found necessary for the security of a covenanted Reformation against the inroads of Popery and Prelacy, nay, and even of the civil liberties of the subject against the encroachments of arbitrary power,—that those only who were the hearty friends of the Reformation, should be employed in places of power and trust. Far from thinking that religious qualifications were essentially necessary to intitle to a place in the Government; they only judged that the proved friends of the Reformation were the only persons with whom they could with safety entrust their civil and religious liberties. Whatever may be said of the impropriety or unfairness of a parallel management in every state of matters; it is certain our ancestors were not mistaken in their prudentials, or unnecessarily upon their guard in their circumstances: while the friends of true religion and the patrons of liberty were almost all on the one side; and the friends of Popery and Prelacy and the abettors of arbitrary power were almost all on the other side;—as came to be woefully demonstrated at the Restoration.—But all this precaution for the revival, preservation and security of the antient Covenanted Reformation, was laid aside at the Revolution; and no other qualification required of those who should be admitted to places of power and trust, but their swearing the allegiance. Nay, as is observed in the *Testimony*, “The draught of an act for excluding such as had a share in the oppressions of the former period, from places of public trust, was laid aside, after it was twice read in Parliament: Hence such were admitted into places of public trust and power, as were both in principle and practice opposite to a covenanted Reformation.”

The next paragraph relates to the sad defects of the Revolution-Church; while they neither expressly condemned the manifold steps of apostasy in the preceding period, nor remonstrated against the

berties of the people. But their plain and obvious meaning was, that as all powers are subordinate unto God the great King over all; so all allegiance, fidelity or obedience is to be promised and given to them,—with a reserve of the allegiance, fidelity and obedience due to God the Highest of all: And that man's interest is not to be preferred to God's, but always acknowledged in subordination thereunto. See *Jus Populi Vindictum*, p. 246. And thus, “as their main aim was to act in the preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms; so they were resolved to preserve and defend the King's person and authority as far as the cause of his person and authority could consist with and be subordinate to that main aim.” *Appendix to the Synod's proceedings in April 1747*. And thus our covenant-allegiance was a complete, though a duly qualified allegiance; and consequently an argument can be drawn from it, against all allegiance which is not so qualified.

the above defective settlement of religion by the Estates of Parliament. But as this is so plain in itself, and so fully explained in the *Testimony* (which all who join in the bond, are previously acquainted with); especially as any objections which have been made unto it, are altogether frivolous †,—as amounting unto no proper opposition to what is here said: we shall satisfy ourselves with laying before the reader the following quotations in support of it. — Mr *Ralph Erskine*, in a sermon on Hof. xiii. 9. says,—
 “ How many ways—hath *Scotland* been destroying itself?—Particularly, by breaking our *National Covenant* with God: We gave our hands solemnly to God, and then departed from him; and gave our hands to the men of the world, by *public resolutions*,
 “ ons,

† It is lamented in the paragraph here referred to, that the *General Assembly* 1690 did not assert the *divine right* of Presbytery, nor the *intrinsic power* of the Church, with respect to the calling of her national Assemblies. But this is cavilled at in the *Burgher overture*, as a prodigious inadvertency, and a great injury done to that Assembly. And the mighty reason which is given for this, is, that there are passing hints in the acts of that Assembly of their belief of the divine right of Presbytery and the intrinsic power of the Church. But the authors of that *overture* should have remembered, that this cavil had been long ago sufficiently obviated by Mr *Ebenezer Erskine* in his *Reasons of Appeal* to the Assembly 1733, p. 41. “ I do not deny, says he, but the Headship of Christ is asserted in our Confession of Faith, and *en passant*” (or by the bye) “ in some other acts of Assembly; but these I humbly conceive were not acts *a propos*” (or, to the purpose), “ and did not answer the design in opposition to the open indignities and affronts done to the sovereignty of the Son of God over his Church in these times, when the Crown was sacrilegiously taken off his head, and set upon the head of a persecuting apostate. The Parliament of *England* and *Scotland*, at the restoration of King *Charles*, judged it necessary to assert his right and prerogative, in opposition to the usurpation of *Oliver Cromwell*, by particular and express acts: And, had not our Assemblies much more reason to assert the prerogative and Headship of our dear Redeemer, in opposition to the sacrilegious usurpations of King *Charles*; who by acts of Parliament had been declared supreme head, not only of all civil causes, but ecclesiastical, and thereupon the oath of Supremacy imposed and taken?”—We need only further observe here, that as whatever is said in this paragraph, is affirmed only of the Assembly 1690; and indeed nothing is here asserted not to have been done by that Assembly, but what was peculiarly incumbent upon them to have done: So any thing brought from Acts of subsequent Assemblies, to invalidate the truth of what is here declared concerning it,—can be nothing at all to the purpose. However, the *acknowledgment of sins* had been equally true,—tho’ what is said of the Revolution-Assembly, had been extended to all and each of the Assemblies since that time: While there are no acts of the latter, more than of the former,—expressly and of purpose asserting the prerogatives of Christ, in opposition to the encroachments which had been made upon them in the persecuting times; and, as Mr *Erskine* justly argues, transient and passing hints were nowise adequate for vindicating the Royalties of our Redeemer from the indignities which had been done to them.

“*ons*, to join with them : Yea, we dishonoured him by—accepting *indulgences* founded upon that wicked *supremacy* assumed over the house of God ;—by neglecting at the merciful Revolution, the fairest opportunity of reviving a *Covenanted Reformation*, and rebuilding his house upon a *right foundation*.” And Mr *Wilson* in his *Defence*, p. 316, says, “ We have just ground to fear, that if the Lord shall enter into judgment with us, on account of the misimprovement of the deliverance in the year 1688,—and for our manifold defections and backslidings from him since that time ; a furnace seven times hotter than the former may yet be set up in *Scotland*, Amos iv. 12. † ”

Thus

† How awful then must the course of the separating brethren be ? Instead of a steadfast adherence to a testimony for a Covenanted Reformation, and against the defections of both Church and State therefrom,—according to the solemn engagement they had come under for that purpose ; they engaged in the defence of a swearing among Seceders, of an oath manifestly inconsistent with that Testimony, and the oath of the bond which they had sworn for the maintenance thereof. That this is no exaggeration of the matter, but the genuine import of their defence of the religious clause of some Burgeses-oaths,—is abundantly manifest, they themselves being judges : For though at first they pleaded the consistency of the Burgeses-oath with the oath of the bond for renewing our Covenants,—they were soon obliged to give up with that plea ; and yet, instead of abandoning the defence of what they saw they could not maintain consistently with the Testimony of Bond, they pretended to find manifold falshoods in them, (particularly on the head of the Revolution-settlement,)—and have never taken a step forward in them to this day.—Nay, at the breach of Synod, they voted and pretended to give a judicial allowance to the swearing of the Burgeses-oath,—even while they left it standing condemned by the Synod, as manifestly inconsistent with the Testimony and Bond.—And they persisted in this course of defection, notwithstanding several means of God’s appointment which had been used for reclaiming them. So that if their offence amounted to any thing at all, it amounted to an obstinate persisting in breach of Covenant with the Most High God ; and in destroying what they had built, as to the whole frame of the Secession-testimony and interest.

It is not therefore to be wondered at, that the *Associate Synod* found themselves at length shut up to the last mean for their recovery, even a cutting them off from the body. The *greater excommunication* has indeed been made the matter of an hideous outcry against the Synod, and the Lord’s work among their hands.—But it ought to be considered, that if they were censurable at all ; and no body can doubt of this who pays a due regard to the Testimony : they were undoubtedly censurable with the greater excommunication ; while they contumaciously persisted in a course, which was manifestly of a wasting and destroying nature to the whole body : for the divine rule leaves no room in such a case, for stopping short of the last remedy for the preservation of the body and the recovery of offenders, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.—It is also to be observed, that this highest censure of the Church is so far from being of a destructive or ruining nature, that it is of a medicinal and healing nature ; *for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus :*

Thus as our Covenanted Reformation was buried at the Restoration; so it was left buried at the Revolution. But a stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre, the stone sealed, and a watch set,—by the incorporating *Union* with *England*. Therefore we acknowledge as follows: “ Our iniquities and
 “ backslidings have increased more and more: Particularly when, by the treaty of Union with *England*,
 “ *land*, in the year 1707, we were incorporated
 “ with our neighbours in *England* upon terms opposite unto, and inconsistent with our Covenant-
 “ Union with them; in regard the maintenance
 “ of the hierarchy and ceremonies of the Church
 “ of England is made, by said treaty, a fundamental and essential article of the Union of the two
 “ kingdoms.”

As the *Associate Synod* express themselves in a *Solemn Warning* emitted by them in the year 1758,—“ No sinfulness is pretended
 “ to lie in that matter, under any civil consideration thereof.
 “ An union of these kingdoms, in itself, is, no doubt, a blessing
 “ to them both: Particularly as it might be improved to the
 “ great advantage of religion and reformation. And our Fathers, in reforming times, would have rejoiced at the prospect
 “ of an incorporating union so improved.—But, in the present
 “ case, we have been incorporated upon terms inconsistent with
 “ and opposite to the covenant union which was formerly attained.
 “ The maintenance of the hierarchy and ceremonies, with
 “ other

Jesus: It is even an office of love and charity, when the obstinacy of the case requires it. So that the case before the Synod really was, Whether, seeing all preceding means had proved ineffectual, this last office of love and charity should not also be performed towards them? And they did not proceed to this, till about three years contending with them in Synod, and about other three years after the breach of Synod.—Moreover, it is to be considered that it cannot be supposed to affect any of those offices or duties which do not flow from Church-membership, or which are not incumbent upon persons precisely in the character of Church-members. Far less can it be imagined to say any thing in reference to the internal state of the excommunicated; while it is by no means the prerogative of the visible Church to judge of persons as belonging to the invisible body of Christ, or as not belonging to it. The utmost effect of excommunication is exclusion from the visible Church, and the privileges thereof. Nay, it does not even destroy brotherhood, but only supersedes all present exercise of the offices thereof. See 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15. And the more eminent that any are in the character of brethren, the more especially they are proper objects of that censure,—when they come to persist obstinately in a scandalous course.

“ other corruptions of the *English Church*, is made a fundamental article of that union; and a solemn consent has been given thereto, on the part of *Scotland*.”

For, in the *Solemn League and Covenant*, *Scotland* has sworn to endeavour, in their several placings and callings,—the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of *England* and *Ireland*, in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches; and to endeavour to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, Directory for worship and catechising; and in like manner to endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, Superstition, &c. Hereby an obligation lies upon *Scotland*, to the latest posterity,—to lay out themselves, in their respective spheres, for the reformation of *England*,—particularly from the Antichristian hierarchy and superstitious worship which obtain in it,—according to the opportunities of providence for that purpose: Not indeed by compelling them to receive their reformation, but by contributing their endeavours for enabling them to reform themselves. *Scotland* has come under the most solemn engagements to God, and to *England*, to do so.

But, by the articles of the union, the *Estates of Parliament* have solemnly declared, that from henceforth no account shall be made of these engagements; nay, and have even plighted the public faith to *England*, that those very corruptions, the extirpation whereof they were bound by the oath of God to have endeavoured, particularly on occasion of a treaty of union,—should (for them) remain in full force and vigour to all generations.—Thus in their act for a treaty of Union with *England*, they expressly provide, *That the Commissioners for the treaty should not treat of or concerning any alteration of the worship, discipline and government of the church of that kingdom, as now by law established*: So that all consultation upon the subject of the Union, is built upon a resolution never to pay any manner of regard to our covenant-engagements. And in their *Act for securing the Protestant religion and Presbyterian Church-government*, which the act ratifying and approving the treaty of union—“ declares to “ be a fundamental and essential condition of the said treaty of “ union, in all time coming,”—after ratifying the confession of faith and Presbyterian church-government, agreeably to the act of settlement 1690; there is the following concluding clause, — “ *Declaring nevertheless, That the Parliament of “ England may provide for the security of the church of England, “ as they think expedient, to take place within the bounds of “ the said kingdom of England; and not derogating from the se-* “ curity

“ security above provided for establishing of the church of *Scotland*,
 “ within the bounds of this kingdom.”

Accordingly, the Parliament of *England*, by an act, in consequence hereof, and before concluding the treaty of union with *Scotland*, intituled, *An Act for securing the church of England, as by law established*,—do, in a way of reviving former laws, enact;
 “ That the uniformity of public prayers and administration of
 “ Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies, with the form of
 “ making, ordaining and consecrating Bishops, Priests and Deacons, in the church of *England*, and all and singular acts of
 “ Parliament now in force, for the establishment and preservation
 “ of the church of *England*, and the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government thereof, shall remain and be in full
 “ force for ever.” And an act of the Parliament of *England*, intituled, *An Act for an union of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland*, containing the said act in it, as well as the other articles of union,—being transmitted to the Parliament of *Scotland*; the same was ordered to be recorded, and accordingly is recorded as an article of the union of the two kingdoms, by the Parliament of *Scotland*. In a word, the foresaid laws and acts of both kingdoms contain a general clause, declaring the laws and statutes, in either kingdom respectively, so far as they are contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said united settlement and constitution, to cease and become void for ever.

“ And thus, with our own Consent, the Anti-
 “ christian hierarchy, and a superstitious Worship
 “ in *England*, have all the security that human
 “ laws can give them; whereby this whole nation
 “ hath again, not only openly given up with their
 “ solemn Covenant-engagements to the Lord, but
 “ also involved themselves in the guilt of consent-
 “ ing to, and thereby approving of the Antichristi-
 “ an hierarchy and a superstitious Worship in Eng-
 “ land.”

It has been alledged by some, though very groundlessly, that the Revolution-Parliament vindicated our solemn Covenants from the indignities done to them in the persecuting times. But though this were granted, it is certain the Union-Parliament declared them buried to all intents and purposes. And the true religion is now no otherwise authorized by the Revolution-Settlement, than according to the Union-Settlement.

The whole *Jacobitish* party in Scotland were most violent enemies to the union,—as settling the succession to the Crown in the
 illustrious

illustrious family of *Hanover*, and so as setting aside a Popish Pretender. But *Seceders* have all manner of satisfaction with it in this respect, and reckon it matter of great thanksgiving to God; however, they object to it as settling the succession † in such a manner as to involve the land in Covenant-violation,—and in this respect reckon it matter of deep humiliation before the Lord. Accordingly, we acknowledge, That,—“ immediately after
 “ the foresaid incorporating union, our land was
 “ made to groan under the load of unnecessary
 “ swearing, in the manifold repetition of oaths;
 “ and the nation was burdened with unlawful oaths;
 “ such as, the oath of *abjuration*, imposed upon all
 “ in civil and military trust, and afterwards upon
 “ the Ministers of the church of *Scotland*;—which
 “ oath we acknowledge as one of our national sins
 “ and steps of defection, in so far as the united con-
 “ stitution, opposite unto our covenant-union, is
 “ thereby homologated and approved.”

It is needless to manifest the sinfulness of a frequent repetition of the same oaths, to persons of any conscience. The only thing here therefore which remains to be spoken unto, is the *oath of abjuration* ‡. And the sinfulness thereof is here acknowledged, in respect

† By different acts of the Parliament of England, particularly those specified in the oath of Abjuration hereafter inserted, it is expressly provided,—that whosoever shall hereafter come to the possession of the Crown of England, shall join in communion with the Church of England, and swear to defend her as by law established. By the second article of the union, these acts are made the rule of Succession to the Crown of Great Britain. And the Parliaments of both Scotland and England, in their acts severally securing their religion, enacted,—that the Sovereign of Great Britain should in all time coming swear to protect and maintain their respective churches as by law established: And both these acts were agreed unto by them, as essential terms and conditions of the union of the two kingdoms.

‡ The oath of abjuration at this time stood thus. “ I A. B. do truly
 “ and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify, and declare in my conscience,
 “ before God and the world, That our Sovereign Lady Queen ANNE, is
 “ lawful and rightful Queen of this realm and of all other her Majesty’s do-
 “ minions and countries thereunto belonging. And I do solemnly and sin-
 “ cerely declare, that I do believe in my conscience, the person pretended to
 “ be Prince of Wales, during the life of the late King James, and since his
 “ decease pretending to be, and taking upon himself the stile and title of King
 “ of England, by the name of James the Third, or of Scotland by the name
 “ of James the Eighth, or the stile and title of King of Great Britain, hath
 “ not any right or title whatsoever to the Crown of this realm, or any other
 “ the dominions thereunto belonging: And I do renounce, refuse and ab-
 “ jure any allegiance or obedience to him. And I do swear, that I will bear
 faith

respect of its homologating the united constitution. Now, if it really does so, the unlawfulness thereof can be questioned by none who retain any regard for a covenanted reformation or Presbyterian principles. But that it really does so, will appear from the two following considerations. (1.) It was originally framed, passed and imposed for the maintenance of the succession in England,—under the express condition of the Sovereign being of the communion of the church of England, and swearing to defend her—as by law established. This is manifest from the oath itself,—while the acts which settled the succession, under this, among other conditions, are therein expressly specified and not obscurely reduplicated upon or sworn unto. But this is still more manifest from the act itself imposing it, while therein are these express words: “On which said acts (viz. the acts referred to in the oath) the safety of your Majesty’s royal person and government, the continuance of the monarchy of England, the preservation of the Protestant-religion, the maintenance of the

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“ church,

“ faith and true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Anne, and her will defend to the utmost of my power against all traiterous conspiracies and attempts whatsoever, which shall be made against her person, crown or dignity: And I will do my utmost endeavour, to disclose and make known to her Majesty and her Successors, all treasons and traiterous conspiracies, which I shall know to be against her, or any of them: And I do faithfully promise to the utmost of my power, to support, maintain and defend the Succession of the Crown against him the said James, and all other persons whatsoever, as the same is, and stands settled by an act, entitled, *An act declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and settling the succession of the Crown to her present Majesty and the heirs of her body being Protestants*; and as the same by another act, entitled, *An act for the further limitation of the Crown, and better securing the rights and liberties of the Subject*, is and stands settled and entailed after the decease of her Majesty, and for default of issue of her Majesty, to the Princess *Sophia*, Electress and Dutchess Dowager of *Hannover*, and the heirs of her body being Protestants. And all these things I do plainly and sincerely acknowledge and swear according to these express words by me spoken, and according to the plain and common sense and understanding of the same words, without any equivocation, mental evasion, or secret reservation whatsoever. And I do make this recognition, acknowledgment, abjuration, renunciation and promise heartily, willingly and truly, upon the true faith of a Christian.”—It is needless to take notice of the variations which came of course to be made upon this oath, on the several accessions to the throne which have taken place since the first framing of it, or on the death of the late Pretender. But it may be necessary to mention the change made upon it in favour of the Ministers of the Church of Scotland, viz. of (AS) into (Which),—So as to run thus—“I promise—to defend the Succession of the Crown—; *which Succession*, by an act entitled, *An act for the further limitation of the Crown, &c.*” However, this will not be found to make any real alteration in the sense of the oath. Suppose one should swear to walk according to the rules of christianity, as the same are prescribed in the Scriptures; and another should swear to the rules of christianity, *which* are prescribed in the Scriptures: No body, I imagine, could perceive any real difference betwixt the oath of the one and of the other.

“ church, as by law established—do under God entirely depend.
 “ To the intent therefore, that the said acts may be forever in-
 “ violably preserved, Be it enacted, That *such and such persons*
 “ *therein mentioned*—take the following oath,” viz. the oath of
 abjuration. (2.) The words in the oath, *This realm, the crown*
of this realm, and *the King or Queen of this realm*, originally meant
 of the *realm, crown, King and Queen of England*,--are expressly
 declared, by the 22d article of the Union, to be understood of the
realm, crown, King, and Queen of Great Britain. So that
 it is unquestionably as much in maintenance and homologation of
 the united constitution of *Great Britain*, as it was originally of
 the single constitution of *England*.—Thus as it was at first an oath
 in maintenance of the Succession to the Crown of England; so
 the maintenance of the Succession, in the sense of the Parliament
 of England, imports the maintenance of the church of England
 as by law established. The Succession to the Crown of Great
 Britain is the same as the Succession to the Crown of England.
 So a maintenance of the Succession to the Crown of Great Bri-
 tain, imports the maintenance of the church of England as by
 law established. And thus, in one word, the swearer of this
 oath *faithfully promises to the utmost of his power*, to see and pro-
 vide, that the Sovereign of Great Britain be of the communion
 of the church of England, and protect her accordingly; so that
 persons of all ranks are involved in an oath in manifest contra-
 diction to the oath of our covenants.

“ Likewise, the *Sacramental Test* is imposed
 “ upon the members of this Church, while serv-
 “ ing the Sovereign in *England and Ireland*.”—

It is sufficient to observe here, that no one can be qualified for a
 post under the government in England or Ireland, till he has ta-
 ken the sacrament, according to the usage of the church of Eng-
 land; hereby giving a test and proof of their readiness to protect
 and defend her, as by law established: And this is what is cal-
 led the *Sacramental Test*.

“ Also, a superstitious form of swearing is intro-
 “ duced amongst us, by *laying the hand upon, and*
 “ *kissing the gospels*.”—We had occasion to say some-
 what of the evil of this, in the Sermons published on Covenant-
 ing. And they who desire further satisfaction, may consult a
Letter upon the subject to the Right Honourable the Lord Chan-
 cellor; said to be wrote by the Reverend Mr *Wilson* of *London*.

“ Further, a short time after the above incorpo-
 “ rating union, particularly in the year 1712, an
 “ almost

“ almost boundless *Toleration* was granted ; where
 “ by a door was opened to gross corruption in prin-
 “ ciple, which always brings along with it loose-
 “ ness in practice : And, in consequence of this to-
 “ leration, the superstitious and corrupt worship of
 “ the Church of *England* is set up in all corners of
 “ this land.”

It is proper to observe here, that while any thing is positively tolerated, it is necessarily under the notion of evil that it is so. A profession of religion is established under the notion of a warrantable good ; it is tolerated under the notion of a tolerable evil. It is easy, in this case, to see, that all toleration of this sort must be evil ; while the least active and positive toleration of what is evil, or of what is judged to be evil,—is contrary to both Scripture and reason. All positive countenance and encouragement to errors and corruptions, or to what are judged to be so,—is manifestly inconsistent with a due respect to divine truths and institutions, or to what are judged to be so,—or at least bewrays a great indifferency about them.—The toleration now granted, particularly for the sake of those of the Episcopal persuasion, was eminently of this kind ; a toleration giving positive countenance and encouragement unto errors and corruptions, opposite to and everfive of the legal establishment already made. An ample door was not only opened for the erection of Episcopal meeting-houses, with all the superstitions and corruptions of the *English* Church : But as the granters thereof were under solemn obligations for the support of Prelacy, with all its concomitant superstitious rites and ceremonies,—through all of them having sworn the public oaths, and most part of them joined in communion with the Church of England ; it was hereby manifest that they bore a good will to what they now tolerated. Besides, as it was granted through means of the prevailing party at Court, who in the latter end of *Queen Anne's* reign were making wide strides towards the introduction of the *Pretender*,—to those of the same kidney in *Scotland* ; “ and it must be acknowledged,” (says Mr Wodrow in his History, volume II. page 618.) “ by all at this
 “ juncture (1715), though some years after some people may
 “ have the impudence to deny it, that the tolerated meeting-
 “ house party have openly joined the Pretender in the present
 “ unnatural Rebellion :” In this case, I say, it eminently endangered the legal establishment in both Church and State. And thus abstracting entirely from *the civil pain of excommunication be-*
ing

ing taken away; (and the *Testimony* takes no notice of this as that by which the government and discipline of the Church were weakened :) Such a toleration had a native tendency to make people think exceeding lightly of the censures of the church. If the church censure them, there is no matter; here is an open door for them, under the favour of the Court: Nay, and a deserting of the communion of the Church of Scotland, instead of being a bar, is rather a step towards preferment,—(at that time, at least.)

Seceders, however, are against all persecution for conscience-sake, or for difference of judgment in matters of revealed religion,—while the civil peace is not disturbed or endangered. It is not of the nature of the true religion to be bettered, but hurt, by the persecution of those who differ from it. Christianity was not erected by carnal weapons, 2 Cor. x. 4. nor was it ever really supported by them, Zech. iv. 7. And indeed the display which the *Associate Presbytery* have made of their principles on the head of the civil Magistrate, in the *Declaration and Defence*—subjoined to their *Answers to Mr Nairn's Reasons of Dissent*, particularly page 71,—which is stedfastly adhered to by the *Associate Synod*; leaves no room for persecuting principles among *Seceders*.—But there is a wide distance between positive toleration and persecution, so that there is no necessity of being for the one or the other, as if there were no midst between them: There is room enough for the christian Magistrate to do all his duty to his subjects, whether the members of the National Church†, or those who dissent from

† The warrantableness of National Churches is a necessary consequence of the Divine right of Presbytery, as contradistinguished from independency. For if three or more congregations may be subject to one Presbytery; three or more Presbyteries may be subject to one Synod, and three or more Synods may be subject to one General Assembly; and thus become all one Church: And fewer or more degrees of subordination are warrantable, as may best suit the circumstances and edification of the whole body. Nay, and the larger the association be, it is the more conformable to the unity of the Catholic Church: So that did it suit the circumstances of all the christians in the world to be thus united, and in more degrees of subordination,—it would be highly proper for them to be so,—which is not a thing, however, to be expected or looked for. But as it may ordinarily suit the circumstances of the people of one nation to be thus united, it is therefore their indispensable duty to be so. And we have ground from Scripture to look for this being more eminently the attainment of the churches of Christ, than has ever hitherto obtained. See Isa. ii. 2, 3, 4; xi. *throughout*; Mic. iv. 1, 2; Rev. xi. 15.—It is to be observed here, that while the church in one nation consists of the generality of the people of it,—and so is what is commonly called a National Church; and the Church in another country consists only of the lesser part of the inhabitants of it, and so is not designed the National Church: This makes no material, but only an accidental difference between them. There was no essential

from her,—without either tolerating, or persecuting them; without either countenancing their dissent, or infringing the liberty of their consciences. We need go no further than Seceders for proof of this. They have no law in their favour, or saying they may make the profession they make; but they are not persecuted,—abridged in the liberty of their consciences, or forced under civil penalties to become members of the Establishment. Now, supposing them to be wrong, and the Establishment to be right,—the civil Magistrate is also right. He is wrong in not making profession of what persons of all ranks in these lands are bound to by the word and oath of God,—as Seceders do. But even upon supposition of his doing it, and a covenanted reformation also becoming the legal establishment; he would be utterly wrong to behave otherwise to Dissenters, than he now does to Seceders.

essential odds betwixt the Protestant persecuted Church of France, and the established Church of Scotland.

However, when we maintain the warrantableness of National Churches, we do not therefore suppose,—That, when a church consists of the generality of a nation, and has the civil Magistrate in communion with her; he is in that case to apply to him for a law obliging every one in the nation to be of her communion, or to suffer for non-conformity: nor do we imagine, that persons, by being members of the civil community, do therefore fall under the pastoral charge of the Church, or become subject to her jurisdiction. The Church is in every case a voluntary Society, Psal. cx. 3; and ought to be kept intirely distinct from the common-wealth.

Nevertheless, there are various ways whereby the civil Magistrate may be of eminent advantage to the Church, without being guilty either of *Erasianism* or *Persecution*. Beside what has been observed on the head of a legal Establishment of religion, he may be of daily advantage to her. He may be of singular usefulness by a due execution of the laws against vice,—and by exemplary godliness in his own person and family. Instead of countenancing any in a state of opposition to the Church,—it is his duty, as an eminent member of the same body, to countenance and encourage her in all her essays for the defence of the truth; and his doing so will be of unspeakable advantage for the curbing of error, and the promoting of truth. Again, instead of making encroachments on the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, it is his duty to shew an exemplary subjection to it, in every thing of a spiritual nature; while, without destroying the civil respect that is due to persons on civil accounts,—the laws of Christ's house admit of no respect of persons on such accounts, in the matter of admission unto or exclusion from the peculiar privileges thereof, James ii. 1. 9: And his example will go a great way towards procuring all due respect to the ecclesiastical judicatories. Farther, instead of laying snares in the Church's way to turn aside from her profession, it is competent unto him to excite and animate her to due steadfastness therein.—To add no more, it is competent to the civil Magistrate as such,—as on the one hand to take effectual care not to encroach on the ecclesiastical jurisdiction; so also on the other hand to provide, that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction shall not invade the civil, or meddle in any thing but only in so far as it respects conscience: This will be of the last importance; while extremes, on the one hand or other, have been the cause of all the religious wars that ever were in the world.

Seceders.—In one word, positive Toleration and Persecution are equally indefensible.

The *Christmas-vacation*, taken notice of in the close of this paragraph, proceeded, I suppose, from the same source; namely, favour for those of the Episcopal communion,—who must needs have an opportunity given them, forsooth, for the observation of their darling holidays, without being incumbered by processes at law. And the re-introduction of an old Popish custom was very well suited to the interests of a *Popish Pretender*.—A late writer endeavours to make Seceders ridiculous on this head. But they are not come the length yet of being ashamed to lament the giving of countenance to what is abjured in our Solemn Covenants, as having no warrant in their Bibles.

The *Restoration of Patronages* mentioned also in this paragraph, flowed likewise from the same spring; a design to strengthen the *Jacobite* interest, and weaken the legal Establishment. Nor are they genuine friends to the liberties of mankind or of Scotsmen, who give countenance to a measure which enslaves the consciences and abolishes the Spiritual Rights of the best part of their country.—What is said of this, as also of the ejection of the four brethren from the established Church in consequence of their bearing testimony against it,—is fully laid open in the *Testimony and Declinature*, which all who join in the *Bond* are previously acquainted with. Those who desire further satisfaction about the first of these, may consult *Park* against *Patronage*; as also, “An attempt to prove, that every species of Patronage is foreign to the nature of the Church,”—said to be wrote by the Reverend Mr *Graham* of *Whithaven*. And those who want full satisfaction about the last of them, may find it in the Reverend Mr *Wilson's Defence*.

For the same reason, I omit saying any thing concerning the evil of the errors vented by Professors *Simpson* and *Campbell*. And indeed all who have any value or relish for Bible truths, cannot but lament that such abominable errors should have been vented amongst us, to the great dishonour of God and ruin of souls; and especially, that no due testimony was borne against them by the judicatories of the Church,—whereby the infection was suffered to spread, and leaven the whole lump. How far it has done it, melancholy experience can testify.

In a subsequent paragraph, it is said, “Also of late, the Sabbath of the Lord has been publicly profaned by the most part of Ministers, their reading the Act of Parliament anent Captain *John Porteous*;

“ *teous*†: By which reading of that act, *the alone*
 “ *headship and Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus*
 “ *over the Church, his free and independent*
 “ *Kingdom, was likewise practically given up.*”

By this act, all persons charged with being accessary to the murder of the said *Porteous*, are commanded upon pain of death to surrender themselves within a limited time; and, upon surrendering themselves, they are appointed to be committed to prison for undergoing their trial;—and all persons concealing or succouring them, after the time for their surrendering themselves is expired, are liable to incur the pains of death: And persons discovering their accomplices are not only indemnified,—but have an ample reward, and are admitted as witnesses. This act intirely of a civil nature, enacted by a court intirely of a civil nature,—is by said court appointed to be read by every Minister of the Church of Scotland, the first *Lord's Day* of every month for one whole year, in the time of *Divine Worship*, under an heavy *ecclesiastical* penalty; viz. That “ In case such Minister shall neglect to read this act, as is hereby directed, he shall for the first offence be declared incapable of sitting or voting in any Church Judicature; and for the second offence, be declared incapable of taking, holding or enjoying any ecclesiastical benefice in—Scotland:” And the Parliament further enact, “ That the said offenders may be prosecuted by summary complaint to the Court of Session, or by process before any Court of Justiciary at the instance of his Majesty's Advocate;” and thus put the execution of the above spiritual censure, a censure superseding an essential part of the Ministerial function, into the hand of a civil or criminal court. And thus they assume a power to oblige the Ambassadors of Christ (who in that capacity are subject only to him,) to tell people assembled for the worship of God—what was fitter for a News-paper or Market-cross than the pulpit; as also, to judge of the qualifications of those who

† This *Porteous* was one of the Captains of the town-guard of Edinburgh. When guarding the scaffold at an execution, as the mob threw stones at the hangman according to their custom,—he fired and ordered his men also to fire among them, whereby a number of persons were killed and wounded. For this he was tried and condemned to die. But as he obtained a reprieve which it was thought would be made perpetual; a body of the people in resentment of the murder of their innocent friends and relations, entered into a resolution to execute the condemned murderer themselves. Accordingly, on the 7th of September 1736, having taken effectual measures to prevent opposition,—they accomplished their purpose in the most public and open manner; and then made the best shift for themselves they could.—This was the affair which gave rise to the act of Parliament here spoken of,

who are intitled to sit in the Courts of Zion's King,—materially deposing all who shall not yield obedience to their commands. And so it is plain, that Ministers, by reading the above act, homologated this *Erastian* encroachment,—materially subjecting themselves in the exercise of their spiritual function to the civil powers. For one cannot yield obedience unto any, without recognizing the authority which requires it of him: *To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey*, Rom. vi. 16. And though by the above act, the civil powers made a daring encroachment on the intrinsic powers of the church; none of the judicatories asserted their rights in opposition thereunto,—or censured the readers for their base betraying of these rights. And so the Church of Scotland in her judicative capacity may be justly constructed to have practically departed from her holding of Zion's King,—agreeably to what is said in the close of this *Paragraph*.

In the close of the *Acknowledgment of public Sins*, after a confession of the evil of the countenance given to the ministrations of Mr *Whitefield*, and of the *Latitudinarian tenets* propagated by him; there is the following clause, “ For which a righteous
 “ God hath justly *chosen their delusions*, and sent
 “ forth a spirit of delusion among them, in the pre-
 “ sent awful work upon the bodies and spirits of
 “ men.”—The work here intended, is that which took place about *Cambuslang* and other places in the west of Scotland, in the year 1742 and a year or two afterwards.—Various members of the established Church, particularly those who were the admirers of Mr *Whitefield's* ministrations, applauded it as an eminent work of the Spirit of God. The members of the *Associate Presbytery* testified against it as in the main a delusion of the devil. And their reasons for doing so—were such as follow.

In the first place, It was begun and carried on by the means of those who were every whit as deeply drenched in the backsliding courses of the times, as most others. And though it was never imagined, but the Lord might bless the ministrations even of such to the good of souls; nay, though it was never doubted, but the truth might be blessed to the conversion of sinners, by whomsoever it was delivered: Yet that persons deeply involved in a course of apostasy, without being brought to a sense or acknowledgment of the evil of their ways, nay, while *holding fast deceit and refusing to let it go*, and even boasting of their alledged success as heaven's seal to the righteousness of their ways,—should be made so remarkably instrumental for the conversion of sinners, as they

they must have been, if this work had been genuine,—was presumed to be at least extremely unlikely. But that the absurd doctrine of an *imaginary idea of Christ as man being helpful to faith*, preached and published upon this occasion, should be made instrumental for bringing sinners to saving faith in Christ,—was judged utterly impossible. See Heb. xi. 1.

Again, the work itself looked extremely unlike a work of the Spirit of God. The supposed converts were commonly all at once seized with dreadful horrors; which cast them into long faintings and swoonings, or frightful agitations and convulsions; or made them screech and roar so as utterly to drown the preacher's voice, that he could neither be heard by themselves nor others. This condition they continued in, some shorter, and some longer. And then they were again all of a sudden ravished with joy, transported (as they imagined) with the clearest manifestations of God's love, and filled with the assurance of (what they took to be) their interest in Christ: And this faith of theirs was attended with or built upon *imaginary ideas of Christ*, according to the *imaginary* doctrine they were instructed in,—so as some of them even imagined themselves to see him. See 2 Cor. v. 16. Mark iv. 26,—29.

Further, whatever external reformation their alledged conversion produced; and a man may be greatly reformed, without being a true convert: It lulled them asleep, as to all concern about the public defections of the day; nay, and filled them with a peculiar inveteracy against those who bore faithful witness against the same;—as if a concern for the public interests of Zion's King had been inconsistent with a due concern about genuine heart religion. Thus, in a word, it was a principal source of that selfish religion, which has prevailed ever since; in opposition to all testimony for the truths of God and against the sins of the times. It fixed the converts and admirers of it in all the Latitudinarian measures taught and propagated by the forefaid Mr *Whitefield* and others.—Upon the whole, it has frequently reminded me of what our Lord says, Matth. xii. 43, 44, 45. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation.*

The above are the passages of the *Acknowledgment of public Sins*, which we supposed ordinary readers would be most diffculted

about†. What follows, is an acknowledgment of *personal* sins ; which are generally understood, though too little lamented over. Our principal business here therefore is not so much to explain them, as to enforce a due concern about them. But all the arguments produced in the sermons themselves for mourning over public sins, are equally conclusive for mourning over personal sins ; and therefore we need not say any more about them here.

Thirdly, We shall consider the nature of a
SERMON IV. Solemn Acknowledgment of Sin.

1st, It necessarily supposes a *searching and trying our ways*, Lam. iii. 40. The Lord lays a charge upon us to do so, in the most solemn manner, Hag. i. 5. *Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.*—Every one must search and try his own heart and ways, lest the *Achan in the camp* should lodge there. Every one must be sincerely desirous of knowing the plagues of his heart and the iniquities of his life, according to the example of the man after God's own heart, Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting.* Job's exercise is peculiarly proper, chap. x. 1, 2.—*I will leave my complaint upon myself ; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul : I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* God finds much fault with the people of Israel for their neglect of this, Jer. viii. 6. *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright : no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done ?* And it is too too evident, that the Lord has a controversy with the generality of professed witnesses at this day, on account of the growing decay of vital religion and the power of godliness,—with an unusual degree of stupefaction and indifferency of spirit under the same. What God said of Israel, is sadly true of us, Hos. vii. 9. *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not : Yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.* This is the source of all the other evils which prevail ; and therefore in an especial manner to be searched into, and mourned over ‡.

† The acknowledgment of sins which has now been considered, is supposed to be made, by people in Scotland. But when different congregations in England and Ireland came forward to desire the renovation of our Solemn Covenants among them,—the Synod (March 5th 1752) appointed the same to be gone about among them, with *additional paragraphs*, suited to their peculiar situation : And these paragraphs are subjoined to the present Sermons.

‡ That the Lord has a controversy with us, is manifest to the sad-felt experience

Again, the sins of our fathers must also be searched into, after the example of the Church in this chapter; lest the special ground of the Lord's controversy should also lie there. This, we are sure, was the case with the Jews at the captivity, 2 Kings xxiv. 2, 3, 4. *And the Lord sent bands of the Chaldees, &c. against Judah, to destroy it.--For the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did. And also for the innocent blood that he shed (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood) which the Lord would not pardon.* Therefore when the Lord in the midst of wrath remembered mercy, it became them to take with the grounds of his controversy. And I make no doubt but it is the case with us also. The burial of a Covenanted Reformation, with the dreadful slaying of the witnesses that ensued thereon,—whereby these lands carried on a war with heaven for many years; though national sins have never to this day been nationally acknowledged or mourned over,—and so are still crying for vengeance against us. *I saw, says John, under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the Testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.* Though this may be laughed at now, unless it is made matter of mourning before the Lord, it will be no matter of laughter one day.

Further, the public sins of the present time must also be searched into, for which we have manifold examples in Scripture; least the special ground of the Lord's controversy should also lie here. This, we know, was the case with the Jews at the captivity. Read 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14,—17. Manifold abominations were persisted in from generation to generation; *until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.* And every body that has religion at heart, must see this to be the very case with us too. Manifold abominations have all the security that human laws can give them: such as, a lordly hierarchy, a superstitious worship, patronage, with manifold unlawful oaths. Besides,

perience of the godly, of all whose spiritual senses are alive; and the primary ground of the controversy lies in a decay of the power of godliness. God forbid! that I should go about to extenuate the sinfulness of that lukewarmness which now abounds, about the public interests of the Redeemer's kingdom: It can never be sufficiently lamented, that *all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.* But whence is it that it is so? It is manifestly owing to a decay of heart love to God, his truths, his ordinances, and his people. So that if ever there is a revival of a due concern about the rubbish of Zion's walls, it must be in the way of a revival in the first place of what is the proper spring of such concern, even of vital religion and the power of godliness. All defection takes its rise from a decay of heart-religion; and therefore all reformation must have its beginning in a revival of it.

sides, there is a most awful increase of error and delusion, of immorality and profaneness, of ignorance and indifference; while no effectual measures are taken to suppress these evils by those whose proper province it is to do it. *The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out and blood toucheth blood.* Hof. iv. 1, 2.—But notwithstanding the amazing height that iniquity has come to,—it would be a token for good, if there was a disposition amongst us, to search and try our ways, to take with the charge, and to mourn over it before the Lord.

2^{dly}, It includes “a real sense of God’s displeasure, and the approach of desolating judgments. If this ly not in the foundation,—no profession of repentance, no profession of reformation, is of any value in the sight of God; yea, it is a mocking of him, which is the highest provocation. It is not enough, that we have a conviction and sense of our own sins, but we must have them also of the sins of the nation, whereby God is provoked to anger; and apprehensions of his displeasure are to influence our minds in all that we go about herein. Unless these abide and dwell in our minds, unless they accompany us continually in all our ways and occasions, rise and lye down with us,—we shall not cordially engage in this duty †.” A feeling sense of our own sins and the sins of the land, is essentially necessary to a right mourning for them. We do not mourn over either of the two aright, unless we can in some measure say as to both, as David does as to his sin, Psal. li. 3. *My sin is ever before me.*

3^{dly}, It implies a downright grief and sorrow for sin. And there is a threefold grief for sin included in this exercise.

1. We must grieve for the dishonour thereby done to God. It cannot affect the infinite blessedness of God, which he always enjoys in and of himself; or diminish his essential glory, which is always the same, even as he himself is always the same. But it is contrary unto his nature, and abominable in his sight; it hurts the interests of his kingdom in the world, and obscures his declarative glory; it is a contempt of his sovereign authority, nay, and an attempt to deprive him of it; it is a *piercing the heart of Christ, a crucifying the Son of God afresh, and a putting him to open shame,*--

and

† *Owen’s Humble Testimony*: A book peculiarly well suited unto these times; and which I would therefore wish to be in every body’s hand. A being endued with the spirit that breathes in it, is the very best preparative for Solemn Covenanting.

and a grieving the Holy Ghost. All sins, particularly public sins, have all these heinous ingredients in them; and are therefore matter of the deepest grief to all that love God. The heart in which the love of God dwells, cannot but rise in indignation at whatever dishonours him. All that have the glory of God at heart, cannot but be deeply affected with every thing that sullies and obscures it. This is, as it were, a taking their all from them. The zeal of God's house eats them up. Grace, in so far as it is in exercise, cannot but resent the indignities that are done to a holy and good God. The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. It grieves them to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls; it embitters their very lives to see transgressors so numerous, so daring, so impudent, and so industrious to pervert the right ways of the Lord, and to draw unstable souls into their snares. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes*, says the Psalmist, *because they keep not thy law. My zeal hath consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. I beheld the transgressors and was grieved: because they kept not thy word.* Psal. cxix. 136, 139, 158.

Error, particularly, however little it is thought of by this irreligious age, is a defaming his blessed name. Truth is the name of Christ, John xiv. 6. Rev. ii. 13. and therefore error must be a *miscalling* of him *who is over all, God blessed for ever.* This must be matter of the deepest sorrow to all those whose genuine disposition it is to say, *Hallowed be thy name.* The establishing of iniquity by a law—is a doing all that is in the power of impotent creatures to put a stop to the advancement of his kingdom in the world. This must be matter of the deepest anguish to all whose prayer daily is, *Thy kingdom come.* The prevalence of error and ungodliness in a land is a heaven-daring attempt *against the Lord and against his anointed; saying. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* Psal. ii. 2, 3. This must be matter of the deepest affliction to all those who daily wish, that *his will may be done in earth as it is in heaven.* The prevalence of a lordly hierarchy and a superstitious worship in the church, nay, or of any thing (whatever it be) beside the mind of Christ,—is a manifest invasion of his sovereign prerogative, as the *one Master and Lawgiver*; and therefore must be matter of mournful consideration, to all those in whose hearts God has wrote his law.

Now, this is the principal reason of grief for sin: We do not mourn for sin aright, we do not mourn for it at all,—unless we mourn for it, as done against God. David has taught us our duty in this matter, by his own example, Psal. li. 4. *Against thee, O Lord, have I sinned.* All other considerations are nothing to this.

this. However it is not the only one. It is a sin against God, to sin against our neighbour, or ourselves; and we must mourn for the same accordingly. So

2. We must grieve for the hurt thereby done to the present generation, ourselves and others. We are to mourn over it, as a spreading pestilence: and therefore with as much sorrow, as we would do the coming of the plague into the land; or rather, with as much greater sorrow, as the soul is more precious than the body.—The Lord threatens sin with sore plagues; particularly, he threatens public and prevailing sins with desolating judgments. Read Lev. xxvi. This calls for grief and sorrow of heart. David is a noble pattern in this matter, Psal. cxix. 120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Jeremiah is not less so. He could not help trembling at the judgments which he foresaw his people's sins bringing upon them, chap. iv. 19, 20, 21, 22. "My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart! my heart maketh a noise in me! I cannot hold my peace! Because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war! Destruction upon destruction is cried, for the whole land is spoiled: Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment! How long shall I see the standard! and hear the sound of the trumpet! For my people is foolish, they have not known me, they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge."—Further, The Lord very usually punishes one sin with another, suffering obstinate sinners to go on in the way of their own hearts. When they will not be reclaimed by the means of his appointment,—he ceases to strive with them, blasts the ordinances to them; and says concerning them—as he did concerning Ephraim, *They are joined to their idols, let them alone.* This is sadly the case at this day. And if any thing affords matter of mourning, surely this is it. This is the judgment which *Isaiah* mourns so bitterly over, chap. vi. 9, 10, 11, 12.—Nay, sin is inevitably the eternal ruin of impenitent sinners. *God shall wound the head of his enemies; and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses,* Psal. lxxviii. 21. And who that has any bowels of compassion, can see their fellow-creatures rushing on the thick bosses of God's bucklers, without lamenting their melancholly condition. The more inconsiderate they are, and the less pity they have on themselves,—they are so much the greater objects of the compassion of others.

3. We must grieve for the injury thereby done to posterity. According to what was already observed, public prevailing evils

bring

bring the judgments of God upon posterity. *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance,* Deut. xxviii. 58, 59. Those therefore who have a natural affection for the fruit of their own bodies, cannot but grieve for those evils which they see pulling down the judgments of God upon them. Even natural affection, in this case, is a source of godly sorrow. This is what our Lord directed the people of Jerusalem unto, Luke xxiii. 27,—31. *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

4thly, It includes a condemning ourselves. All right mourning for sin includes self-condemnation. We must come to God, as the Syrians came to the King of Israel: *They girded Sackcloth on their loyns, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the King of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live:* and we must take shame and confusion of faces unto ourselves, plead guilty to his indictment against us, and acknowledge it will be entirely of Sovereign mercy if we are not punished according to our deserts. As to all the judgments already come upon us, we must leave our complaint upon ourselves; after the example of the church in the 33d verse of this chapter, *Howbeit, thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.* In confessing our own sins, we must condemn ourselves, and acknowledge it would be just with God to punish us with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. In confessing the sins of our people, we must acknowledge the equity of the divine sentence against them; and that it would be just with God to execute upon them and us—all the judgments written in his word. This was Ezra's exercise, chap. ix. 6, 7. “O my God, says he, “I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: “for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers, have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for “our iniquities have we, our Kings, and our Priests been delivered into the hand of the Kings of the land, to the sword, to
“captivity,

"captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day." In like manner, *Daniel* expresses himself, chap. ix. 8. *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our Kings, to our Princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.*—This is a person's and peoples passing sentence on themselves, according to the holy law. And till they pass sentence on themselves, there is sad reason to expect the execution of the Divine Sentence.

5thly, It is accompanied with a fear of God's judgments on account of sin: Not such a spiritless fear, as leads to discouragement and sloth; but such a holy fear, as excites to diligence in the means of escape. *A prudent man forsaketh the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.* David was eminently exemplary in this. *Horror hath taken hold on me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law,* Psal. cxix. 53. He trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, and the judgments which sinners were thereby bringing on themselves; it even cast him into horror. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments,* Psal. cxix. 120. And indeed to confess sin, without a deep sense of the evil nature and awful apprehensions of the direful fruits thereof,—is not to confess it at all.—And here I cannot but lament it, as one of the worst signs of our times, that our wonted fear of God's judgments is gradually dwindling away. We know that God has a controversy with us, but are not affected with it. We see the threatnings of God's word directly pointed against us, and yet it makes little or no impression upon us.—This is a sad evidence of the decay of vital religion. As vital religion thrives or decays; so will a sense of the evils of the day increase or decline: And according as our sense of prevailing evils is quick or languishing; so will a fear of God's judgments be weak or strong, passing or abiding.—It is a sad preface of the near approach of judgments. Drowsiness is an evidence of the night's coming on. They who will not hear, shall feel. *While the bridegroom tarried, the wise as well as the foolish virgins slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him,* Matth. xxv. 5, 6. The time was, when the impressions of judgments were lively and strong. But these impressions are gradually wearing off, as the judgments draw on.—And hence it evidently appears, why there is such a prevailing backwardness to a solemn acknowledgment of sins. Had people a due sense of the evil nature of sin, and suitable apprehensions of the bitter fruits thereof,—this would be instead of all arguments, to excite them to confess it. But while neither their sin nor danger touches them, the necessity of confession touches them as little.

6thly, It is attended with a deprecating of the divine indignation on account of sin. Right mourners will be fervent supplicants. *Daniel* was eminently exemplary in this. He mourns and prays at the same time, chap. ix. 16,—19. “ O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do, defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city, and thy people are called by thy name.” The same exercises are observable in all the solemn acknowledgments recorded in Scripture.—In deprecating the divine displeasure, we must beware of denying, hiding or palliating our iniquity. *If I regard iniquity in my heart,* says the Psalmist, *the Lord will not hear me,* Psal. lxi. 18. *He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* It is only therefore in the way of making a free and unhampered acknowledgment of the sin of those lands, that our supplications for the averting of divine judgments can meet with a favourable answer.—Instead of extenuating our iniquities, we must acknowledge them under all the aggravating circumstances attending them. And indeed our sins in these lands are exceedingly aggravated: As being committed under the clear sun-shine of the gospel; as being persisted in, notwithstanding the loud calls of both word and providence to return unto the Lord; and as being fallen into, after repeated solemn engagements to the contrary.—Nay, so far must we be from palliating the grounds of the Lord’s controversy with us, that we are even allowed to make an argument of them for his shewing mercy to us. We have a proper pattern in this matter, Jer. xiv. 7. *O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy names sake: for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee.* The more aggravated our iniquities be, we stand in so much the more need of mercy; and God is so much the more glorified in shewing mercy to us.—And here we cannot but lament, that there is so little of a disposition this way among professors in our day. We have sad reason to make the prophet’s lamentation our own, Isa. lxiv. 7. *And there is none that*

calletb upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee. May the Lord awaken us, and give us grace to join with Moses in his prayer, Psal. xc. 13,—17. *Return, O Lord, how long ! and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy, &c.*

7thly, It is accompanied with hopeful expectations of the Lord's anger being turned away, and his comforting us. To humble ourselves before the Lord, is not to bow down our heads as a bulrush,—giving way to dispondency and discouragement, with respect to the case of our own souls, or the state of the Lord's work ;—but it is to lift up our heads, in the assured faith of God's being pacified toward us for all that we have done; and in the believing prospect of the Lord's returning, causing his anger towards us to cease, and building Zion as in the days of old. It is the faith of divine mercy that makes the heart to bleed with sorrow. Hence it is said, Ezek. xvi. 62, 63. *And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord : That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.*—Now, we have a sure foundation for the faith of the forgiveness of our own sins. The fountain of a Redeemer's blood is opened in the dispensation of the gospel; and we may wash and be clean, Zech. xiii. 1. We are required to confess our sin with the hand of faith on the head of the antitypical scape-goat, our Lord Jesus Christ. The language of a right confession of sin is a saying as in Isa. liii. 6. *All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* We are not to confess our sin, in order thereby to procure the forgiveness of it; but in the faith of the forgiveness thereof, through the blood of Jesus,—on the credit of God's own gracious promise of forgiveness.—We have also ground to expect the Lord's returning and reviving his own work amongst us. These lands, we are sure, were in the Father's gift to his own Son from eternity. Psal. ii. 8. He accordingly took early enfeoffment of them; and has all along kept possession of them, notwithstanding multiplied and aggravated transgressions on our part, and in spite of the restless and vigorous efforts of hell and earth to dispossess him of them : He hath not at any time left himself without a witness; and hath even in our day raised and maintained a testimony, in such a way as may put all unbelieving jealousies out of countenance. This is undoubtedly a token for good, of the Lord's yet reigning gloriously in the midst of us. He will not put a bill of divorce into our hands, while we are willing to own him as

our Lord and Husband. And however little prospect there is in the mean time of any eminent revival of his work; it may be a great deal nearer than we think. It has been the Lord's usual way to bring about deliverance, when it was least expected. See Gen. xxii. 14. Deut. xxxii. 36. Psal. cii. 13. 14. Mic. iv. 10. Zech. xiv. 6, 7. The most eminent revival of the Lord's work in all the churches—is yet expected, on the credit of Scripture-prophecies and promises; and the land which the Lord has all along owned in the most signal manner, may expect a large share in the common blessing.—Thus the language of a right acknowledgment of sin is, *He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea*, Mic. vii. 19.

8thly, It must issue in a genuine reformation; a present sincere purpose and endeavour of it, and a future steadfast persisting in it. Our repentance for sin is not genuine,—unless we turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience. Our grief for our own sins is not real, unless we forthwith engage in *crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts* thereof. Our sorrow for the sins of others is but pretence, if we can upon occasion have fellowship with them therein. The great design of a solemn acknowledgment of sin—is reformation. All is lost, without this. Our conversation must be a practical acknowledgment of sin every day. In this respect, in an especial manner, repentance is not the work of a day, but of every day. It is this that glorifies God. And it is only this that can be an effectual testimony of the evil of sin to the generation, Prov. xxviii. 4. *They that forsake the law, praise the wicked: but such as keep the law, contend with them.*—Thus the people of Israel having made an acknowledgment of sin, they renew their covenant with God in this and the next chapter. And indeed those that are heartily grieved for sin, cannot but resolve against it. The backwardness of the generality in our day to the necessary duty of renewing our solemn covenants, will be found to be owing to a prevailing indifferency about the evils of the times.

Fourthly, We shall consider the *manner* of a solemn acknowledgment of sin. Here we shall speak a little both to the *external* and *internal* manner of it.

1st, We shall speak a little to the external manner of it. Beside what has been already advanced on this subject, we observe,
1. That it is to be done *personally*: that is, every one is to make his own sins, the sins of present and former generations, matter of deep humiliation before the Lord in secret. A profession of repentance in public must be the genuine expression of the exercise

life of our hearts in secret. A confession of sin is not genuine, till it burst from an heart no longer able to contain itself. As was the case with *Jeremiah* with respect to the word, such ought the frame of our hearts to be with reference to the sins of the times. *I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay, Jer. xx. 8, 9.*

2. That it is to be done *socially*. A mourning over the abominations done in the midst of the land in secret—is so far from superseding a mourning over them in public, that it natively issues in it. We cannot sufficiently recommend heart-exercise about the sins of the times; but surely they know not what it is, who would applaud it to the disparagement of an open profession of sorrow for them. Would to God, we were all downrightly grieved in heart for the sins of the land! this would be instead of all arguments to excite us to a solemn and joint acknowledgment of them.—The truth is, we have all sinned together, and therefore we ought all to make confession together. A little leaven has sadly leavened the whole lump. I am greatly afraid, that these lands, for a course of years backwards, have been like the noisome dunghill, wherein one part serves to corrupt another. Professed witnesses (many of them, at least) are beginning to have a sad stink of their corrupt neighbours about them; at the same time that they are often the means of hardening a backsliding generation, by their indifferency and scandalous offences. Thus as we have been snares and temptations to one another, it is highly proper we should make a joint confession of sin to the glory of God.

Here we meet with a very common objection, namely, that if the whole land was disposed to make confession of sin, we would readily do so too; but till then we do not see to what purpose our doing it can serve†. To this we answer, (1.) This is to make the example of others, and not the law of God, your rule. Would you be willing to take your lot with others in the day of universal retribution, or even in the day of God's coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity? If not, you must not carry yourselves, as they do now. (2.) This objection savours rank of being ashamed of Christ and of his words, in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation. They who cannot endure to be thought singular and unfashionable for Christ's sake, are

† See the note at the end of these sermons.

are certainly ashamed of him. And I greatly fear, that a disposition of this sort is a principal reason why many at this day are so backward to this duty. See Rom. xii. 2. (3.) This argument is so far from being conclusive, that the very reverse hereof ought to be inferred. If the generality are so far from mourning over their own and the land's sins, that they hold fast deceit and refuse to let it go,—as is sadly the case at this day; there is so much the louder a call to the exercise of a solemn and explicit confession of sin,—this is of itself an alarming call to extraordinary fasting and humiliation: And so will every body think, that is duly affected with the dishonours done to God among us. (4.) It is a mistake to think that a solemn acknowledgment of the sins of the land can serve to no purpose, while all do not join in it. It is manifestly for the glory of God, according to Jer. xiii. 15, 16, *Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.* It justifies his threatenings against a sinful people; it is a taking with guilt, a confessing that God might justly do as he threatens to do. It vindicates the righteousness of his providence, in his forbearance with a sinful people and nation. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil,* Eccles. viii. 14. The confession of sin is an acknowledgment, that forbearance is no forgiveness; nay, that our sin is aggravated in proportion to the lengthening of the divine patience with us: It is an expression of our fears of the approach of God's judgments, and a deprecating the same accordingly.—Again, it is manifestly for our own interest. We cannot otherwise clear ourselves of the guilt of the land: *qui tacet consentire videtur*; he who holds his peace in such a time as this, is held as a consenter. And so it is only in this way that we can expect to *meet our God* in peace and friendship, when he comes to execute his threatned judgments. See Amos iv. 12. Nay, it may be a lengthening out of the tranquility of the whole land. Ten righteous persons would have saved Sodom.

2dly, We shall speak a little to the internal manner of it. We are to acknowledge our iniquities.—

1. *Sincerely.* Sincerity lies in conformity between the language of the heart and of the mouth. Our professions of repentance and new obedience ought to be—our hearts (as it were) turned outwards. Our expressions of sorrow for sin can be of no avail in God's sight, further than as they come from a sorrowful and contrite heart. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and*
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a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise, Psal. li. 17. To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word, Isa. lxi. 2. Promises of new obedience are of no consequence in God's esteem, further than as they are the genuine purposes of the heart. Hence we have a heavy challenge given to the hypocritical professor, Psal. l. 16, 17. Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. Men may be imposed upon by fair shews; but he with whom we have to do is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Nay, God being a Spirit, he cannot be delighted with that which is not the deed of the inward man: even supposing heart and lip to agree, it is still the language of the heart, which is suited to the nature of the Deity, John iv. 24. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Outward expressions are necessary only in reference to one another, and to a vindication of God's injured honour before the world; but it is the exercise of the heart that God looks to, and regards in the matter.

2. *Believingly.* We are to acknowledge our own and the land's sins, in the faith of the indispensable obligation we are under thereunto. In this respect, *whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.* We are to set about it, in the faith of promised assistance, Zech. xii. 10. *I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.* And according to our faith, so will it still be unto us. We are to confess sin, in the faith of the forgiveness thereof, according to what was just now hinted. In a word, we are to do it, in the faith of God's acceptance of us and our services. And his promise is, *All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered unto thee, and the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory, Isa. lx. 7.*

3. *Singly.* Singleness lies in having a supreme regard to the glory of God in the matter. It is not indeed requisite unto singleness, that we have no other end in our repentance for sin, but the glory of God. It is perhaps impossible not to have respect to our own interest and happiness. But it is essentially necessary thereunto, that the glory of God be our chief and highest end. And a subordinate respect to our own advantage is nowise inconsistent with an ultimate regard to the glory of God; we may desire our own
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and others benefit, that God may be thereby glorified. Thus a solemn acknowledgment of sin is to take its rise from an ardent concern for the glory of God, and is to be honestly aimed at the manifestation of the glory of God; he must be the *Alpha* and *Omega* of it.—There can be only few in our day, who are under any temptation to profess to be mourners for the sins of the times, thereby to obtain any applause from men. But a disposition of this kind, in whomsoever it is, is undoubtedly the worst sort of all selfishness. To make religion subservient to one's credit before the world, is certainly the worst use that ever was made of it. It is to put the best thing in the world to the worst use in the world. Verily, such shall have their reward: Perhaps, they may be esteemed; but it is more likely they shall be discovered and detested, Prov. xxvi. 26; and they shall be *cast into utter darkness, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

4. *Freely.* All right confession of sin bursts forth spontaneously from a heart full of grief; as waters flow from a natural spring. Cain, Pharaoh, Ahab, Judas, came all to an acknowledgment of sin; but it was whether they would or no: It was pressed out of them; it did not flow from them. And just so is it sometimes with very careless sinners, in the time of judgments inflicted or feared. An invasion, an earthquake, or the plague will extort a confession from the hardest hearts. Such confession is the fruit of slavish fear, not of godly sorrow. Fear forces them to what they have no heart to. So when their fears are gone, they have no further concern about sin. But they who have such a sense of sin as was before described, wrought in them by the Holy Ghost,—cannot but burst forth into an acknowledgment of it, from an inward oppression of mind on account of the dishonours thereby done to God. Their spirits, oppressed with a sense of sin, cannot be easy, without a free and unhampered acknowledgment thereof to the glory of God. See this exemplified in the case of David, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4, 5. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* He had such a deep sense of sin, as pryed on his spirits and wasted his strength,—till he came to a free and full acknowledgment of his iniquity.

5. *Sorrowfully.* We are to mourn over sin, not with a slight but intense grief. He who has a due sense of the infinite evil of sin, will never think he mourns over it too much or even enough:

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may, he will mourn, because he mourns not more. *Ezra sat down astonished*, being incapable to express his grief, chap. ix. 3. *Jeremiah wished, that his head had been waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might have wept day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people*, chap. ix. 1. But of this before.

6. *Continually*. Right grief is no transient pang, but a perpetual habit. It is not enough to mourn over the abominations done in the midst of the land,—during times of impending danger, or about the time of a solemn acknowledgment of sin in the renovation of our covenants: He that would answer his duty in this matter, must mourn every day. *Just Lot vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the wicked*, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. It is the constancy of our sorrow that proves the sincerity of it.

I cannot conclude this head, without making the following reflection. There are many evidences of the Lord's having a controversy with a witnessing body. It is in every body's mouth, though I am affraid it is in few of our hearts. Well, this I take to be one special part of the controversy; even our not sighing and crying for all the abominations done in the midst of the land; our not doing it in such a manner as is required, towards turning away the fierce wrath of a holy and jealous God,—whatever we may have done professionally. A heavy load of guilt lies on the land; and it lies on us too, unless we are grieved for it *aright*: It stands as a mountain between God and us,—intercepting between the light of his countenance and our souls; and it will do it, till it is *duly* mourned over. To think, that a professional disclaiming the deeds of our fathers and of the present backsliding generation, is enough to remove all controversy with us on account thereof,—is a most vain imagination: We are not free from the guiltiness of them, nay, we make them our own,—unless we are suitably grieved for them; if we know and avow the sinfulness of them, and yet do not mourn over them in a manner suited hereunto,—we shall (like the servant that knew his master's will and did it not) be beaten with many stripes. Now, are we indeed so exercised? I fear few can say upon good grounds that they are. The sins of the times are matter of speculation and talk to many, but matter of lamentation and heart-exercise to few. Perhaps, we abstain from the grosser sort of them: But does it cut us to the heart, to see others running upon them with greediness? Perhaps, we continue in the outward profession of the sinfulness of the more *refined* sort of them: But hath the zeal of God's house eaten us up? or have the reproaches of them that reproached him fallen upon us? Is not our

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wonted zeal much abated? and are not lukewarmness, neutrality, and indifferency come in its room?—I cannot dissemble so far as not to signify my apprehensions, that the backwardness of many in various congregations to join in *the solemn acknowledgment of sins and the bond* for renewing our covenants, is a shrewd evidence of this being the case with them. I take covenanting, in the manner agreed upon by the Associate Presbytery, to be the special duty of the times; and the peculiar spite and antipathy which is shewed to it by all sorts of persons in our day, is no contemptible evidence of its being so. But to be backward to what is the special duty of the times, is certainly a very bad sign about any. However, I shall not now insist on this, or any other evidence of indifferency about the sins of the times; but leave it with every one's conscience to consider, how far it is the case with him as is above represented. Well, if it is so, how can we expect the wonted smiles of God's face? When we become genuine and hearty mourners for our own and the land's sins, and walk accordingly; then and not till then can we expect the wonted favours of God's people, Mic. ii. 7. *O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord staidned? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?*

Fifthly, We shall consider the season of a solemn acknowledgement of sin; or, which is the same thing, of solemn fasting and humiliation on account of our own sins and the sins of the land. Fasting is a moral duty,—required in the second commandment, according to our *Larger Catechism*. The Apostle supposes the continuance of it under the New Testament, while he says, *Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer*, 1 Cor. vii. 5. Our Lord gives the sanction of his authority to it, while he says; *The days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them*, (his disciples) *and then shall they fast in those days*, Luke v. 35. There are no anniversary fasts appointed to be observed under the New Testament: And indeed fasting is an occasional duty,—the calls whereunto do not recur in a certain revolution of days, months or years. But being a moral duty, it must be incumbent on the Church† to appoint times for that purpose, according to

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† We say the *Church*, in contradistinction to the *State*. Whatever may be said for the civil Magistrate's appointing days of fasting and humiliation, in cases of extreme danger; when fasting is manifestly necessary,—before the
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the calls of providence thereunto: Providence points out the proper seasons for it; and it is the duty, particularly of Church office-bearers, to observe the signs of the times, and to appoint days of fasting and humiliation accordingly: And while they do so in agreeableness to the calls of providence, they do not injoin what God has not previously required of us,—but only declare what God in his providence is calling us unto:—nor is providence hereby made the rule of our duty, but only of the season of observing it.—Now, there are peculiarly three seasons in which God in his providence, calls to solemn fasting and humiliation; a time of abounding sinfulness, a time of impending judgments, and a time of urgent necessities: And all these concur in our times.

1st, A time of abounding sinfulness is a proper season for a solemn acknowledgement of sin. And the more that sin abounds, the call to it is so much the louder. If we have forsaken the Lord, it is our indispensable duty to return to him; to return to him,—in the way of confessing our sin, and coming back to our duty: An obligation lies upon us hereunto, by the express command of the Holy Ghost, Jam. iv. 8, 9, 10. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.* And when a society, greater or lesser, have forsaken the Lord, the very same obligation lies upon them in their collective capacity: Societies, as well as individuals, are under the divine law. And here lies the warrant for family, congregational and national fasting.

Now, as there is a most awful abounding of iniquity in our day

office-bearers of the Church can have opportunity to appoint it, or when it is impracticable for them to assemble for the purpose: It is undoubtedly wrong in ordinary cases,—either for the Magistrate to appoint days of fasting, or for the Church to observe them: It is an usurpation of a spiritual supremacy in him; and a practical renunciation of the Church's intrinsic rights in her.—It is upon this principle, that Seceders refuse to observe days of fasting appointed by the King. At the same time that they can yield to none of their fellow-subjects, in prizing the civil government under which they live; neither can they recognize the ecclesiastical supremacy claimed by his Majesty,—in consequence of which it is that he appoints fasts. Without giving offence to the consciences of their fellow-christians, by any indecency of their carriage on such occasions; they dare not so much as seem to make a practical surrender of their unalienable privileges, by the observance of fasts on the same days appointed to be observed as such by the King. They did so indeed once; but they acknowledged the sinfulness of their having done so, on the very next fast-day observed by them,—and they have walked accordingly ever since.

day, we are under special obligation to this exercise. There are these three things in our case, which deserve particular consideration.

1. All sorts of sins abound. The sins condescended on in the *Acknowledgement of sins prefixed to the bond for renewing our Solemn Covenants*, are awfully on the increase: Most of them still prevail;† and many of them are on the growing hand. The flood of error is awfully on the increase. The hedges are not only broken down, but the tender vines are spoiled: Church government and discipline are not only unhinged; but the very vitals of christianity are attacked. Latitudinarianism is making speedy progress: The far greater part of the precious truths of God is like to be swept away with a torrent of indifference about them; which, as it is one of the worst of abominations, is now established into a professed principle with many: They are even come the awful length of applauding it, as one of the very best of things: Nay, they are even as zealous for neutrality about any fixed system of principles, as our godly forefathers were for the most valuable truths of the gospel. The generation are sunk in ignorance: Even the very form of godliness is dying fast away: Nay, they are driving fast back to Paganism, and know it not. Many are come the dreadful length of being past shame: Ungodliness is become so fashionable, as to be gloried in by not a few. It is even impossible to describe the melancholy case of this generation.—There is also a dreadful prevalence of sins against the second table of the law: The most flagrant breaches thereof abound: And manifold violations of it are so much grown into custom, that, instead of being accounted vices, they are reckoned polite embellishments; and are accordingly pursued with greediness.—Thus “the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood,” Hos. iv. 1, 2. “Men” are “lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers

† The actual practice of some of them—is superseded, by the introduction of new abominations into the place of old ones. But none of them have been nationally and explicitly acknowledged, or mourned over; and therefore the guilt of all them is still lying on the land, and to be mourned over accordingly.

“ lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form
 “ of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3;
 4, 5.

2. Persons of all ranks are deeply involved in this great guiltiness. What the prophet says of his time, is sadly true of our's.
 “ Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-
 “ doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the
 “ Lord, they have provoked the holy one of Israel unto anger,
 “ they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken
 “ any more? ye will revolt more and more: The whole head is
 “ sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot
 “ even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds
 “ and bruises and putrifying sores: They have not been closed,
 “ neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” Many
 being past feeling, they have given themselves up to sin, to work
 all manner of abominations with greediness. Those in power are
 at no due pains, according to their station and capacity, to put a
 stop to the dreadful current. Nay, some of our leading abomi-
 nations are authorised by the laws of both Church and State:
 While others of them are connived and winked at. Others,
 with an unmanly silliness, are giving way to the rapid torrent, as
 thinking their endeavours ineffectual for putting a stop to it.
 Many who have made a profession of opposition to the prevail-
 ing course, are now beginning to make light of it. While there
 is little of a deep concern for all this among any. So that all of
 us, one way or another, are deeply involved in the public guilti-
 nesses.

3. There is so far from being any appearance of matters
 growing better, that they are daily growing worse, and likely to
 do so. We shall mention but this one evidence of it, *viz.* The
 small appearance there is of religion about the rising generation.
 We are much degenerated from what our fathers were; and the
 next generation bids fair to be still worse. The old witnesses are
 quickly dying off; while few are rising up in their stead, and
 even those few fall short of their zeal.

These things considered, it is high time to stir up ourselves to
 bemoan the awful case. We are satisfied, that deliverance will
 come, in a glorious revival of the Lord's work; and it will come
 in this way. There could not be a better token for good, than
 our being enabled to *lament after the Lord*, 1 Sam. vii. 2.

2dly, A time of impending judgments is a proper season for a
 solemn acknowledgment of sin. This is a dictate of nature, as
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appears in Jon. iii. 4,—9†; and has accordingly been the practice of all people in times of imminent danger. So the only thing here necessary to be proved is, that our times are really such. And for proof of this, we would recommend to your frequent and serious perusal, *The solemn warning* sometime go emitted by the *Associate Synod*. And in the mean time we shall only offer the two following things.

1. Manifold judgments are already inflicted. All things considered, spiritual judgments were never more general, or more dreadful. There is a great restraint of the influences of the Holy Ghost: We are the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. And God himself tells us the awfulness of this judgment, Hos. ix. 12. *Yea; wo also to them, when I depart from them.* He ceases to strive with many, having said concerning them as he did concerning Ephraim, Hos. iv. 17. *Ephraim is joined to idols: let them alone.* And what can be more awful than when there is a commission given to ministers, to ordinances, to providences, to conscience,—to let sinners alone and perish in their iniquity? What we read in Isaiah, chap. vi. 9, 10. is sadly verified in our day, “And he said; go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.” Few sons are born in Zion. Few are brought under any serious convictions of their lost and undone state. Fewer still are brought forward to a gracious outgate, through faith in the blood of Jesus: *The children are brought to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth,* as we read in Isa. xxxvii. 3. There was never a deeper decline among the godly, in point of zeal, of tenderness and activity for God. *Strangers have devoured our strength, and we know it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we know it not,* Hos. vii. 9. Nay, many are fainting and going backwards. Many of the Lord’s people are sadly bewildered, in the dark and cloudy day; nay, and even possess with strong prejudices against a testimony for truth. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

2. Further judgments are yet to be feared. The spiritual judgments already inflicted, are evidently on the growing hand. At the same time, they are the usual forerunners of desolating strokes. Thus it follows in the two verses immediately after what

† It is observable, that the people, and not the King, were the first proclaimers of the fast in Nineveh.

we just now quoted from the vi. chap. of *Isaiab*; "Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Their case is exactly our's, and therefore we may fear the threatening shall be executed upon us as well as on them. A course of apostasy from our covenanted reformation—has been persisted in now for a long time; notwithstanding many calls to return to the Lord, by the testimony of his witnesses and the strokes of his providence. And therefore if the Lord take his usual way of *visiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him*, we may be sure some signal stroke cannot be afar off. And it is to be observed, that it is not merely according to the actual frowns of providence, that we are required to apply the threatnings of God's word to our own case: But that it is chiefly according to what provocation the Lord gets by prevailing wickedness; especially in a land which he has so eminently favoured as this.—Now, the time of God's forbearance is the proper season for mourning over our abominations: When the execution of threatned judgments comes, it is in a great measure out of time; and men's spirits are usually as much out of frame.

3dly, A time of urgent necessities is a proper season for a solemn acknowledgment of sin. This we learn from *Ezra*, viii. 21, 22, 23. *Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Abana; that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance, &c.* Well, all that have any understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do,—must have important business at a throne of grace at this day; for the Lord's gracious revival of vital religion and godliness, for his maintenance and defence of a testimony lifted up for the truth, and for his promised rebuilding of Zion in these lands. The revival of heart-religion must ly very near the hearts of all that have any sense of religion. The maintenance of a testimony for the truth must be matter of very deep concern to all that have any regard for the glory of God. The testimony of our day has often been in eminent hazard of falling to the ground: Great have been the fears of friends and the hopes of enemies this way; while the Lord's cause, to outward appearance, has been hanging (as it were) by a hair. And the progress and advancement thereof through the land, must be matter of fervent desire with all that have a due value for it. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence. And give him no rest*

rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, Isa. lxii. 6, 7. But this is not to be expected without fervent wrestling with the Lord for it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.*—Thus it may be expected, that people will be hearty in a solemn acknowledgment of sin, in proportion to their concern for the revival of the Lord's work.

Lastly, We shall make some practical improvement of the subject. And here we shall be very short†. Hence see,—

1. An argument for the duty and seasonableness of Covenanting. If an acknowledgement of sin be duty, covenanting must be so also; and if that be seasonable in our day, this must be so in like manner: because, as was already hinted, an acknowledgment of sin must issue in a genuine reformation; a present sincere purpose and endeavour of it, and a future steadfast persisting in it. And indeed an acknowledgment of sin and covenanting ought always to go together, either more explicitly or more implicitly. Accordingly, our *Directory for the public worship of God* appoints ministers, in the close of every fast, to engage themselves and their people to reformation,—particularly, as to those evils which are the grounds of the fast*.—Thus the duty of covenanting differs

† As the explication of the *Acknowledgment of Sins* turned to be larger than was expected, a variety of things is omitted,—such things, namely, as are ordinarily insisted upon.

* “Before the close of the Public Duties (of a day of public fasting) the minister is, in his own and the people's names, to engage his and their hearts to be the Lord's; with professed purpose and resolution to reform whatever is amiss among them, and more particularly such sins as they have been more remarkably guilty of; and, to draw nearer unto God, and to walk more closely and faithfully with him in new obedience, than ever before.”

Thus I might here observe, that the duty of National Covenanting cannot be refused by any who allow the warrantableness of National Fasting: The latter necessarily infers the former. A hideous outcry indeed is now made against covenanting, under the notion of National Covenanting,—as if the nationalness of it were some Antichristian abomination. But there certainly can be no weight here;—because if covenanting be at all warrantable, it is certainly competent to many, as well as to few; nay, the more join it, the better. And if the Church shall happen to consist of the whole or the generality of a nation, why may not they all join in it accordingly.—After all, it is the public joining of the whole Church in the same oath of God, in contradistinction to the disjointed covenanting practised by the Independents, that is primarily pleaded for: And covenanting is maintained to be the duty of a whole nation,—even as it is the duty of them all to be the sincere and hearty subjects of Zion's King, and to avouch their loyalty and allegiance to him accordingly,—whenever there is a call in providence hereunto. In a word,

differs nothing from the duty of every day of fasting, except in the explicitness and solemnity of it. And so the duty and seasonableness of covenanting can be refused by none, who believe it to be a seasonable duty to sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the midst of the land.

2. An answer to a frequent objection against the *Act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing our Solemn Covenants*. Some pretend to be friends to the duty of covenanting in general, who yet object against the *bond's* reduplicating upon the preceding *Acknowledgment of Sins*,—in these words, “and the other evils named “in the above confession of sins.” But an acknowledgment of sin without a declared purpose of avoiding it, is plainly disingenuous: so that the reduplicating clause cannot be found fault with, but at the expence of cutting off the whole preceding acknowledgment. We have shewed an acknowledgement of sin to be an essential ingredient in right covenanting with God. And upon a serious and unbiassed perusal of the *Acknowledgment of Sins* prefixed to the *Bond*, it will be found to contain no more than an enumeration of the various steps of defection from attained-to reformation with which these lands stand chargeable. So that the reduplicating clause cannot be scrupled at or found fault with by any who are for honestly adhering unto reformation principles: while that reduplication supposes, and so cannot import an ascertaining the truth of the facts acknowledged.—For the same reason, the *act concerning the terms of ministerial and Christian communion* cannot be justly objected unto. It infers no more but an obligation upon those of our communion, to adhere properly and stedfastly to the principles of a Covenanted Reformation. At the same time, persons are by the act itself expressly required to be borne with; not indeed in the way of setting themselves in opposition to the *bond*,—but in the way of lying open to light in the use of the means of God's appointment, resolving to join as the Lord shall be pleased to clear up their way †.

3. Whence

word, covenanting is competent unto the whole Church, that is, to the whole number of the visible subjects of Christ; whatever proportion they bear to the whole nation, whether as the greater or only as the smaller part.

† Mr Ralph Erskine, in his *Appendix to Faith no Fancy*, p. 27, very justly observes; “That, by enacting the renovation of our National Covenants “with a new bond suited to the times, no new terms of Church-communion “are engsted by us, but such as were made and exemplified to our hands by “the Church of Scotland in reforming times, an hundred years ago,—by a “ministry as wise, faithful and zealous as any in our day, and surely much “more so than the brethren (Messrs Willson and Currie) that now have “turned

3. Whence it is that the generality are so backward to the duty of covenanting; it is from unacquaintedness with, or indifference about the grounds of the Lord's controversy with these lands. It is no wonder, that these who do not inquire into the prevailing defections of the day, or are utterly unconcerned about the open indignities done to the Lord,—should look upon the renovation of our Covenants with indifference, or even contempt and prejudice. And this, alas! is the sin and judgment of the generality in these lands; nay, and even of some of whom better things might have been expected. *For the Lord hath poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed their eyes, Isa. xxix. 10.*

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Whereas

“turned their back upon our Covenanted Reformation. If they own these covenants to be binding upon the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, they so far own they are bound to the same terms, as well as we and our people. These things may seem new to most of this generation, that have been burying the reformation-work in oblivion; though in some of our congregations they cannot be reckoned so, wherein, at every baptismal engagement, the people have been put in mind thereof more than thirty years by-gone. If these brethren have been, or are deficient this way, as well as the rest of the backsliding generation,—it is no wonder that they cry out as if some new and strange thing were appearing. But their direct opposition to this work, under the notion of new terms,—and their loading it with reproachful invectives, attempting to expose it as an enacting of sinful terms of communion,—serve only to shew, how openly they are breaking God's bands and casting his cords from them; to the stumbling and hardening of a perfidious generation, against which God is threatening a sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. If these brethren had cast but a favourable eye upon that foresaid act of Presbytery, they would have seen we made no absolute rule for our people therein without an exception,—excluding them all from sealing ordinances at the rights, that could not instantly see their duty in this matter; and that the act lays down rules of tenderness towards weaklings in the flock of Christ,—if they do not evidence a malignant spirit of enmity against the work, but a friendly disposition thereto.”

—What is here said of Messrs *Wilson* and *Currie*, is equally applicable now to the *Burgher* brethren.

We might add here, That if the principles of a Covenanted Reformation be agreeable to the word of God; and they are proved to be so in our standards, wherein these principles are laid down: And if the evils condescended upon in the *Acknowledgement of Sins* be severally steps of defection from a Covenanted Reformation; as every one who impartially and candidly compares them with a Covenanted Reformation, will find them to be:—Then it follows by inevitable consequence, that the above-mentioned act of the *Associate Presbytery* lays down no other terms of communion, than what our Lord Jesus Christ hath laid down in the holy Scriptures. So that it is in reality a proper and stedfast adherence to the unerring rule of faith and manners, in opposition to the various deviations therefrom in our day, that is by said act made the term of communion; and consequently no other term of communion is thereby imposed, but what the alone Lord of the conscience hath prescribed: while the proposed renovation of our Solemn Covenants is not to be considered as one particular duty—made the term of communion, exclusively

Whereas if once they were awakened to see their sin and danger, the now despised duty of covenanting would appear in an amiable and desirable light : people could not but mourn over their own and the land's sins ; they could not but give up with them, and contend and testify against those who would still retain them ; *all the land would rejoice at the oath.*—In a word, unconcernedness about sin is the principal cause of all the prevailing backwardness of the people in our day to this duty. All the objections unto it take their rise here,—as lying more in the love of backsliding courses, than in opposition of judgment to it. Thus it is easy to observe, that some who once professed to be friends to this duty, still continued to do so,—till they found a necessity, for covering their own apostacy, to palliate and extenuate the sins of the land.

4. Whence it is that so much venom is spued out against Covenanting and Covenanters, by a backsliding generation in our day ; and that people of very various and different principles—agree in their opposition particularly to this part of the testimony. Why, *it torments them that dwell upon the earth*, Rev. xi. 10. And Solomon tells us, whence it is that it does so, Prov. xxviii. 4. *They that forsake the law, praise the wicked ; but such as keep the law, contend with them.* The open testimony which is borne against their evil ways in the *Acknowledgment of Sins*, is what condemns, torments and galls them.—There are others who give out themselves to be witnesses against the sins of the times, as well as the *Associate Synod* and those in subjection to them. But their not setting about the renovation of our Covenants, in the way of swearing to contend and testify against the evils of the time, with various circumstances attending their not doing of it,—makes people construe them not to be in great earnest in the matter : the world's malignity is therefore turned from them, against those who are seen to be in earnest.

5. The duty of those who propose to join in the *Bond* for renewing our solemn covenants. There are particularly two things which this subject recommends unto you ; the study of distinct knowledge, and the study of serious concern.

(1.) Study a distinct understanding of the principles of a covenanted reformation, which you herein vow to adhere unto,—as also, of the evils of the time, which you in like manner herein swear to testify against †. This is necessary to your swearing
with

clusively of, or preferably to others ; but as the *general* and *seasonable* form of avouching *all the principles and duties* of our holy profession.

† It has often been alledged by those who are adversaries to the duty of Covenanting, that the *Bond*, especially in respect of its reduplicating upon the *Acknowledgment of Sins* prefixed to it, consists of such a variety of intricate matters, —that it is impossible for ordinary Christians to attain to such a measure of know-

with judgment, as also to the due performance of your vows. And for this end, make a diligent improvement of the means of knowledge which providence hath laid to your hand. Diligences it is to be expected, will be crowned with success, Prov. ii. 3; —6.—But you are carefully to remember, that it is not head-knowledge, but heart-knowledge, which is of chief necessity here. A good measure of speculative knowledge is indeed absolutely necessary. But to have your consciences satisfied about the truth and importance of the principles of a covenanted reformation, and about the evil of the defections and sins of the time; to have experience of the power and efficacy of the former on your hearts, and a deep and abiding sense of the sinfulness of the latter on your spirits: To have thus an inbred and heart-felt satisfaction about the matter of the *Bond*, is of far greater necessity than the very highest degree of mere speculative knowledge. The defection from time to time of some who had a high degree of head-knowledge, is a melancholy verification of this truth.

(2.) Study

knowledge concerning it, as is necessary to a joining therein with judgment: It has been also alledged, that persons of no tolerable degree of knowledge have been admitted to join in covenanting; and this has been even pleaded as an argument against the work itself. To which we answer, (1.) If there are any admitted to join in the *Bond*, who have not a competent understanding of it, —no body will undertake to vindicate this. However, even allowing there may be some instances of inadvertency that way, it cannot be fairly used as an argument against the duty itself. It says that the practice of those who may be chargeable with it, is faulty; but can never say that the duty itself, of renewing our Solemn Covenants, is either unwarrantable or unreasonable. Laxness of admission to the Lord's table, was never used as an argument against the duty of communicating. Nor ought some instances of inadvertency in the admission of persons to join in the *Bond*, be made an argument against covenanting. After all, I am persuaded, our greatest adversaries will do us so much justice as to own, —that greater strictness, care and circumspection were never used in any communion, in the matter of admission to all peculiar privileges, than among Seceders. (2.) The argument taken from the complexness of the *Bond*, militates with equal strength against an adherence to our standards, —as it certainly requires no less judgment and diligence rightly to understand our standards, than rightly to understand the *Bond*. The truth is, those who have a distinct understanding of our standards, will easily perceive the various evils condescended upon in the *Acknowledgement of Sins* to be manifest defections from them. —And as to the *history* contained in the *Testimony* and *Acknowledgement of Sins*; it has been of late so much canvassed and laid open, that it is become a great deal more easy to be understood than could otherwise have been expected. Seceders are not a little beholden to their adversaries in this matter. —To prevent, however, the more ordinary sort of professors from the necessity of turning over to a variety of books in order to a distinct understanding of it, —is the design of this *Essay*.

(2.) Study to get your hearts deeply impressed with a sense of the sinfulness and snares of the times. In order hereunto, think on the melancholy case of these lands. There is a prevailing degeneracy in court and country, in the magistracy and in the ministry. A covenanted reformation is the matter of a common odium and nuisance. Serious godliness is generally esteemed to be nothing but fancy and melancholy. Little or no conscience is made of any of those duties which do not concern civil interest; at the same time that the generality strive to take all the advantages of their neighbour, which can consist with their own safety in law. Manifold abominations are nothing thought of, and pass without any censure,—except among those who are a spectacle to the world for their conscientiousness. And all this is exceedingly helped forward, by a prevailing and general exploding of the doctrines of the gospel; yea, even of the law, in its purity and spirituality. Little of the good old Protestant doctrine is to be heard in a Protestant land. The complaint sometime ago was, that these lands were fast hastning to *Papery*; but the complaint may now as justly be, that they are fast hastning to *Paganism*,—with this fearful aggravation, that they are doing so of their own accord, without any force or constraint. The times have been wherein it was eminently dangerous to be *Presbyterians*, hearty *Protestants*; or to have any appearances of serious godliness. But the time now is wherein we may without danger be Protestants, Presbyterians, Covenanters, even as zealous and hearty for religion as we will; and yet error and immorality of all sorts, prevail now more than ever.—Under all this degeneracy, there is a deep security. Such is the bewitching influence of sin,—that though persons of all ranks are deeply drenched into all manner of abominations, they are so far from suspecting themselves to be in danger, that they imagine all is well with them, and never better. They *blest themselves in their hearts*; saying, *we shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our heart, to add drunkenness to thirst*. Nay, which is abundantly more melancholy still,—there is a prevailing indolence and security among the Lord's own people. The generality are off their watch. Few are disposed to stand in the gap. We have left, alas! our first love, zeal and concern for God's glory. Our wonted zeal for the maintenance and display of a testimony is dwindling away. Would to God, it may not dwindle into utter indifferency, or a going down the stream as do others.—This woful security of all sorts, amidst the general and growing prevalence of public evils, particularly these condescended on in the Solemn *Acknowledgement of Sins*,—is an alarming sign of the
Lord's

Lord's being about to "send a fire among them that dwell carelessly in the Isles." That he "cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the land for their iniquity; when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Study therefore to be living under an affecting sense of the grounds of the Lord's controversy; so as to *fight and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the land*; thus making a proper appearance on the Lord's side. Lament in secret, over personal and public evils; that so ye may be properly disposed for a public concurring in the Solemn *Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties*. Confess your God, confess unto him; and vow to him, and pay your vows. Give glory in this manner to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.

Here follow the paragraphs referred to by a note on page 98.

The Associate Synod did agree and enact (March 5th 1752), "That the renovation of our Solemn Covenants be essayed among those under their inspection in *England and Ireland*,—according to the Act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing the same in *Scotland*: And that in the mean time, until the Lord shall be pleased to give access for a more particular enumeration of the public evils of those kingdoms, in former and present times; there be two general paragraphs concerning the same, inserted respectively in the *Acknowledgment of Sins* prefixed to the *Bond* for renewing our Covenants, and immediately after the other public matters in that acknowledgment; —of which paragraphs the tenor follows."

The Paragraph relating to *England*.

All these evils above-mentioned, we desire to confess and mourn over before the Lord: In regard we are specially called to humiliation upon account of these evils in our neighbouring land, not only as many of them are likewise prevailing among us in this land; but also in respect of the Covenant-union and uniformity of the three kingdoms,—as this sacred bond upon all the three kingdoms, is wofully broken asunder and cast off, unto the great dishonour and provocation of the Lord, by the public defections in each kingdom; and considering likewise, that many of us are involved in the public guilt of our neighbouring land, as being the natives thereof, or the near posterity of such natives. Moreover, we desire to confess and lament over it before the Lord, that though this land was early visited by the light of the glorious gospel; and afterwards privileged with the Lord's glo-
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rious appearances, in bringing us up out of the spiritual Egypt and Babylon of *Popish* darkness and idolatry: yet there has never been a suitable improvement of those privileges, by all ranks, in a due turning to the Lord and his way. At the reformation from *Popery*, the *Episcopal* government of the church was maintained; —with many other dregs of *Popish* corruption and superstition, in their worship and discipline. And as there was afterwards a further prevalence and establishment of these abominations, especially for some years before the dawning of a reformation from *Prelacy* in the last century; so, many were brought under grievous oppressions and sufferings, for their testifying against those evils, and endeavouring a further reformation. Likewise, though the Lord graciously brought forward unto a begun reformation from *Prelacy*, and other evils, in the last century; yet grievous opposition was made unto that work, so that it was soon overthrown and extinguished, by a flood of *Sectarian* errors and delusions, with the prevalence of a malignant spirit. Thus abjured *Prelacy*, with all those evils that accompany the same, was restored and established, upon the ruins of a Covenanted Reformation: and such as essayed to testify against it, or refused compliance therewith, were subjected to still more cruel oppressions and sufferings, in the late times of tyranny and persecution. And though the Lord did mercifully deliver and preserve this land from the yoke of *Popery* and tyranny at the late wonderful Revolution; yet there has been no turning to the Lord from all these evils and corruptions: but, on the contrary, the generation have held fast their iniquity, and refused to be reformed. The land has been likewise overflowed by new floods of errors, and apostasy from the truth of the gospel. Many gross heresies, subversive of divine revelation, such as *Deism*, *Arianism*, *Arminianism*, and other errors, have been spreading, and greatly entertained. Woful darkness prevails more and more; gospel-ordinances are sadly corrupted, perverted, and prostituted, particularly by the *Sacramental Test*: and the generation is destroyed for lack of knowledge.

The Paragraph relating to *Ireland*.

All these evils above-mentioned, we desire to confess and mourn over before the Lord: In regard we are specially called to humiliation upon account of these evils in our neighbouring land, not only as many of them are likewise prevailing among us in this land; but also in respect of the Covenant-union and uniformity of the three kingdoms,—as this sacred Bond upon all the three kingdoms is wofully broken asunder and cast off, unto the great dishonour and provocation of the Lord, by the public defections
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in each kingdom ; and considering likewise, that many of us are involved in the public guilt of our neighbouring land, as being the natives thereof, or the near posterity of such natives. Moreover, we desire to confess and lament over it before the Lord, that though this land was early visited by the light of the glorious gospel, and though the light of the reformation from *Poper*y has been also made to break up among us in this land; yet the gospel of Christ, in the truth and purity thereof, has never been entertained, but wickedly opposed all along, by the great body of the natives. Reformation-work has made little progress: the generality have been still continuing under the banner of Antichrist, in the profession of *Poper*y; and the great part of others have been still continuing under the banner and establishment of abjured *Prelacy*, with the manifold evils of *Prelatical* corruption and superstition. The Covenanted Reformation from *Prelacy*, and other evils, in the last century, got very little footing and entertainment in this land; but the truth and purity of gospel-ordinances was generally rejected. And the manifold departures of all ranks from the Lord, with their refusing to be reformed, have been heinously aggravated; particularly as being a sad misimprovement of the dreadful and alarming stroke upon the land, by the *Popish* massacre in the year 1641. Likewise, instead of making any suitable improvement of the Lord's glorious appearance for delivering from *Poper*y and tyranny, at the Revolution; a woful opposition was made in this land, to that work, in favour of a *Popish* tyrant; and since that time, instead of a suitable turning to the Lord and his way, the generation has been holding fast their corruptions, and further multiplying their provocations. The land has been overflowed by new floods of errors, and apostasy from the truth of the gospel. Many gross heresies, subversive of divine revelations, such as *Deism*, *Arianism*, *Arminianism*, and other errors, with a rejecting all particular tests of orthodoxy and soundness in the faith,—have been spreading and entertained, under the name of *new light*; without having any suitable testimony given against the same. Woful darkness prevails more and more, gospel ordinances are sadly corrupted, perverted, and prostituted; particularly by the *Sacramental Test*: and the generation is destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Here follows the note referred to at the foot of page 108.

I have observed, that these who make this objection (mentioned in page 108,) have generally another; namely, that what they call a supporting of *Prelacy*, by the making of certain payments

to the clergy in England,—is manifestly inconsistent with an engagement to contend and testify against Prelacy. But, of all the objections which have been made to the renovation of our Solemn Covenants, this is undoubtedly the most unreasonable; especially as made by those Seceders who forbear to join in the Bond, and yet continue to make these payments:—Because, if covenanting be a seasonable duty, as they generally profess it to be; and if the payment of what are called the *Easter-reckonings* be inconsistent with it: The case is quite plain, they should go on in what is duty, and forbear what is sinful.—However, I conceive, there is no inconsistency between covenanting and those payments; even as there is no inconsistency between covenanting and subjection to the present civil government. It is not by the authority of the clergy, that they are demanded,—but in virtue of a title to them in law. And though they have no *statute-law* for the exaction of them, but only *use and wont*; this makes no difference betwixt them and the things for which they have *statute-law*: Because matters of use and wont belong to what they call the *common law*; and courts as readily give decisions according to the common as the *statute-law*, the one being pleadable in judgment as well as the other.—What of a person's substance is required by common or *statute-law*, or by the common order of civil society, cannot be reckoned his own,—more than the rent which is in a tenant's hand can be reckoned his own; and consequently, the payment of it can no more infer an approbation of the uses to which it is applied by those to whom it is paid,—than a tenant's payment of his rent can infer an approbation of the debauched uses which perhaps his master makes of it. A man, by being a householder in England, becomes liable in law,—not only for his rent to his landlord, but for certain dues to the incumbent of the parish; and the payment of the latter is as much the condition of his living in a house within the bounds of such a parish, as the payment of the former is the condition of his living in a house belonging to such a gentleman: So that when he pays his *Easter-reckonings*, he pays only part of his rent; and not he, but the government which has made the Church of England the legal establishment, is accountable for the bad use that it is put to.—The civil society has a claim upon the several members thereof, for what is judged necessary unto the support of the Church. And this is originally intended for the maintenance of a Church, as a *Church*, not as a *corrupt Church*. But if the major part of the society will have a corrupt church, and apply what was originally intended for a good purpose unto a bad,—the minor part is not accountable for that.—It is here always supposed, as the case with Seceders really

really is,—that only a simple payment is required of and made by them, without any concomitant declaration of consent to the uses made thereof; as also, that they are engaged in a public testimony against the corruption of these uses: in which case, payment by them cannot be constructed in any other light, than as a compliance with the common order of civil society.

There is no comparableness here, with the case of our late sufferers in *Scotland*,—who refused to pay a certain cess; because they were forfeited persons, thrown out from the protection of the civil government,—and the cess was required for the express purpose of hiring soldiers to kill them. There can be no doubt about the unlawfulness of a person's hiring ruffians to shoot or hang him; and a government can have no claim on the purses of those to whom they refuse protection, or the benefit of government.

Hard exactions were made on the Israelites in Egypt; and what of their effects or workmanship they were obliged to give up, was no doubt partly applied to the worst of uses: But this was considered as their affliction,—and their submission to such exactions was never charged on them as their sin.—The Israelites likewise paid heavy taxes under the Babylonish captivity, which no doubt were partly applied to the worst uses of heathen idolatry; and they complained of this as a heavy trial, Neh. ix. 36, 37.—but they never confessed it as their transgression.

In a word, persons may reckon themselves safe, in point of conscience, to comply with all simple payments according to the civil order of society, whether statute or common law,—in any country where they are enjoying the benefit of government; without reckoning themselves any way answerable for the government's application thereof,—while they are otherwise studying honesty with respect to public corruptions.

The Associate Synod had this affair under their consideration, *March 4th 1752*; and “agreed in declaring,—That though the
“afore-mentioned payments are applied for the support of manifold corruptions and superstitions in those Episcopal churches” (of England and Ireland) “which we are assaying to testify against, and which all ranks of persons in these lands ought to
“be humbled for before the Lord, as being deep causes of his
“wrath against and controversy with them: Yet the Synod do
“not find a relevant ground for scruple of conscience, about submitting to civil authority in the foresaid payments; as if this
“could imply any homologation of the foresaid corruptions and superstitions; or of what application is made of those payments
“unto the support thereof;—while the payers are openly engaged

“ gaged in a public testimony against the same, and are not sup-
 “ pressed in the maintenance of that testimony,—but are pro-
 “ tected in the exercise of their civil and religious liberties; and
 “ the said payments are made only in compliance with the com-
 “ mon order of society.”——We shall only add, that it is upon
 the same principles that Seceders in Scotland should pay stipend
 to the established clergy there; otherwise, they do not act con-
 sistently with the Secession-Testimony. And indeed I have often
 wondered, what way people could alledge ground of scruple in
 the one case, and not in the other: Because if the law of the
 land may be complied with in Scotland, it may also be submitted
 to in England; while we are every whit as much engaged to con-
 tend and testify against the corruptions of the Church of Scot-
 land, as of the Church of England; and if the government are
 wrong in giving the public encouragement to Episcopalians in Eng-
 land; they are also wrong in giving it to corrupt Presbyterians
 in Scotland.



F I N I S.